

WALSALL CHRONICLE

Thursday, December 11, 2014

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Accolade for town, in a roundabout way



PAGE 5

TRIES AGAIN

Walsall walks it against visiting side



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Wizzard musician funeral date set



Mike Burney, who was 75
THE funeral of a saxophonist who played with 70s rockers Wizzard will take place next Thursday.

Mike Burney, the 75-year-old who played on their classic massive Christmas hit I Wish It Could Be Christmas Everyday died last month after battling cancer. The service will be held at Sandwell Valley Crematorium, Newton Road, on December 18 from 2.15pm. It will be followed by a wake at The Wheatsheaf in Birmingham Road, Walsall.

Mr Burney, of The Butts, Walsall, had met and performed with a range of music legends – including Sammy Davis Jr, Petula Clark, Steve Winwood, Dionne Warwick, Billy Eckstine, Mel Tormé, Cliff Richard and even Bob Hope. But he is best known for his membership of 70s glam pop group Wizzard, led by Brum rock star Roy Wood.

Dead Staffie found in bin

THE RSPCA are investigating the discovery of an emaciated dog found dead in a wheebin in Walsall.

Officers were called to an address in Arundel Street, Caldmore, last week and made the grim find.

The Staffordshire Bull Terrier was found to have been moved to a wheebin and the cause of death is to be established.

An investigation is now under way to trace the owners of the dog and the circumstances surrounding the dog being dumped.

BATHS SET FOR £150k REVAMP

A SWIMMING baths is to undergo a £150,000 makeover in the latest move to improve leisure centres in Walsall.

Darlaston Leisure Centre will undergo refurbishment to spruce up the building when cash is secured by Walsall chiefs. It comes as Oak Park and Bloxwich leisure centres are to be rebuilt and Walsall Gala Baths transformed to improve facilities.

Darlaston's pool in Victoria Road is near 15 years old but a revamp, subject to cash being available in next year's budget, will refresh facilities and upgrade maintenance. Leisure chief councillor Khizar Hussain said: "The scheme represents a refit and cosmetic uplift of Darlaston Swimming Pool, which will be 15 years old next year.

"The proposal covers a range of works typical to a facility that age; the intention is to freshen the centre's appearance, improve some facilities that are approaching the end of their life and address some underlying maintenance issues.

"This will help achieve the council's goal of getting more people, more active, more often." The main Walsall Gala Baths is poised to get a £1 million makeover after plans were revived – despite the need to make millions of pounds' savings.

Firm plans are being

By Craig Hughes

drawn up and are set to include a changing village, sauna room, extended fitness suite and pool improvements. The prospect of transforming the outdated Tower Street site, which dates back more than 50 years, was first raised last year.

The former Conservative-led council revealed it was looking at the option of replacing the Gala Baths and creating a new swimming pool and multi-storey car park complex. However, the now-controlling Labour group is looking to maintain the building as part of the 2015/16 budget.

The new leisure centres at Oak Park and Bloxwich form part of a £24m scheme to create modern facilities across the borough. Work is starting in the coming months and it is hoped they will both be fully operational in 2016.

Restaurant in the pipeline

An EMPTY unit could be transformed into a restaurant and hot food takeaway under new plans. An application has been submitted to open the business in Wednesbury Road, Walsall, prompting objections. Five letters of opposition have been submitted to Walsall Council amid concerns including the amount of similar premises, parking and noise. The site lies within the Pleck Local Centre and members of the planning committee are being recommended to grant

It's Christmaaas! As Noddy lights up



Tom Powell and David Norchi, who were performing, from Walsall College, with Noddy at Walsall Manor Hospital

HUNDREDS turned out to greet homegrown Slade star Noddy Holder as he switched on the Christmas lights at Walsall Manor Hospital.

The Walsall-born entertainer returned to his roots and a rapturous welcome when health trust staff, patients and visitors at the event in the atrium at the main entrance of the site last week.

There was plenty of laughter and live music with a choir and a band.

He performed the switch-on alongside unfazed five-year-old patient Jayden Webster, who was wheeled in

his hospital bed, to take part in the ground floor festivities. He was presented with gifts by Noddy including a Minion rocket launcher, a toy car and chocolates to cheer him up.

Noddy, aged 68, said: "It's really touching that people turned out. It's really nice to be invited to switch on the lights. It's great to be back in the Midlands because it's the only place where people understand what I say."

"It's also brilliant to see so many faces that recognise from Beechdale where I grew up." Jayden's mother Sarah Bedworth, 32, of Penderell

Street, Bloxwich, explains that the Sunshine Infants School pupil was taken into hospital three weeks ago after breaking his right leg.

"This was a complete surprise. We didn't know Jayden was going to do the switch-on with Noddy. We were invited to come down and join in. He took it all very well and wasn't fazed at all. Noddy was really nice." The star will be forever associated with Christmas because of the Slade's seasonal hit Merry Xmas Everybody, which reached No 1 in the charts in December 1973.

Burglars in church donations break-in

BURGLARS have struck at a church in the Black Country, smashing its sound system before fleeing with copper coins from a donation bowl.

Church leaders have hit out at those responsible, saying the damage has come at the busiest time of year. St Bartholomew's Church in Church Hill, Wednesbury, was hit last Wednesday.

Thieves broke in and made off with a CD player and coins from the donations bowl. But before leaving they also smashed up the church's amplifier and mixing desk.

Just weeks earlier the church hall suffered a break-in.

Rev Tim Vasby-Burnie said the damage caused in the latest incident has come at one of the worst possible times of year.

"With all the Christmas services coming up it is a real hassle for us to be fixing the sound system at a time when we are trying to get people in and bring people together."

"We had two funerals the following day, one with over 100 people. It was very awkward to have no working sound system."

"The system was still broken for our Sunday service so those with hearing loops were unable to use them."

June finish for surgery

WORK to create a permanent doctor's surgery for up to 3,000 patients in Bloxwich is due to be completed in June next year.

The two-storey building and a pharmacy will be built in Fisher Road and replace a temporary surgery which opened in 2012.

The plans were granted permission last year. A new planning application has been submitted asking for permission to allow the temporary surgery to be in place longer than planned.

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Jury still out on M-way link road bid

NO clear favourite emerged after three days of public consultation on the preferred route for a link road between the M54, M6 and M6 Toll.

Everybody agreed that the development was needed to ease traffic congestion in Shareshill and Featherstone, but each of the three alternatives presented by the Highways Agency had its supporters. A decision on the final choice is expected

by early next year. There will then be a further consultation period before an application for planning permission is submitted in 2016.

Work on the road will not start until 2018 at the earliest and will take two years to complete meaning that it will be finished in either 2020 or 2021. Local district councillors and parish councils in the area are understood to prefer the option

in which the M54 is widened from junction one to the M6 and the existing hard shoulder converted to a fourth traffic lane between junctions 10a and 11.

The alternatives are to build a new 1.5 mile road between junction one of the M54 and junction 11 of the M6 by passing Shareshill and Featherstone or to lengthen this by almost a mile taking the road from

junction one of the M54 to link directly to junction eight of the M6 and the M6 toll.

The latter would require a flyover to carry the road over the A460.

Barry Lander, of St Mary's Close, Shareshill, said: "I have gone for the direct route to the M6 and toll. I have nothing against the others, but this seems the most sensible option."

Car park facing axe to allow firm expansion

A PUBLIC car park in Walsall is poised to be axed because of dwindling numbers and to enable the expansion of a nearby business.

Mercedes Benz is planning to use the existing 56-space council car park in Dudley Street, Walsall town centre, to increase its display area and create more room for customers. Councillors are being recommended to approve the plans.

Spray helps to keep the flu at bay



Jade Bird with the Fluenz

STUDENTS from a school in Walsall have been getting protection against flu without a needle in sight.

Year seven and year eight pupils across Walsall are being offered the vaccine Fluenz as part of a public health pilot scheme throughout the Black Country.

Fluenz is a nasal spray, rather than an injection, which offers the same protection against the flu virus and reduces the chances of young people getting sick and missing time off school because they are ill.

Young people at Joseph Leckie Academy were recently given their vaccinations.

Year eight pupil Jade Bird, aged 12, said: "I was a bit unsure about having it at first, but I spoke with my parents and we went onto the NHS Choices website and I felt more reassured."

At a meeting tonight, they are also set to agree the disposal of the land as it is no longer well-used.

A report to the planning committee states there are alternative car parks available for motorists. It comes as the authority has been carrying out a parking review in the town. It is anticipated extra jobs will be created in the long-term through the expansion of Mercedes next to the car park.

In his report, head of planning, David Elsworth, says: "The proposed use for car sales display is in principle acceptable and brings back into use an under-used car park in this part of the town centre."

"It will allow for a well-established, existing business to continue to operate and grow at its existing site."

"Recent car parking surveys indicate that the existing car park the subject of this planning application, is no longer used to its capacity and with the Asda car park opposite there are two other nearby car parks in Mountrath Street which can accommodate approximately 80 spaces."

"The car park is considered surplus to requirements for public car parking and, on balance, the high-way authority considers that the loss of this public car park is unlikely to have severe transportation implications."

An application was submitted to the council through Gareth Jones, from agents Tyler-Parkes Partnership, earlier this year.

Housing group's baking power



Alison Malpass, Joanne Griffiths, Amanda Banks and Madeline Moorcroft with their treats

STAFF and tenants at a Walsall-based housing group staged their own version of the hit cookery show The Great British Bake Off to serve up more than £300 for a town hospice.

Keen amateur bakers from WATMOS Community Homes hosted the bake-off at its Lichfield Street offices on December 5, raising £305 for St Giles Hospice.

The hospice, a 12-bed in-patient hospice based at the Palliative Care Centre in Go-scote, is WATMOS' nominated charity and staff and tenants regularly hold fundraising

events to support its work. Bake-off judges Lynda Rowan and Doreen Collins, from the Tenant Services Panel, and Walsall central team apprentice Bradley Hancox had the tasty task of sampling the scrumptious selection and picked out the star bakers.

Yvonne Jeffries, senior finance officer, was crowned the winner for her delicious chocolate brownies and Madeline Moorcroft from Burrows Street Tenant Management Organisation came a close second with her chocolate cake.

Patients will get nursing home stay

DOZENS of beds are now available at nursing homes in Walsall for patients who can be discharged from hospital but still need support before they go home.

The 40 beds have been commissioned by health and social care chiefs at Parklands Court and Ash Grange nursing homes in Bloxwich, Arboretum Nursing Home, Birchills, Redhouse Nursing Home, Palfrey, and Aldridge Court, Aldridge.

It is hoped the beds will ease the winter pressures on Walsall Manor Hospital and help people who may need physiotherapy and other care before being able to go home. More than 20 patients have already benefited from the plans.

Walsall's social care chief, Councillor Diane Coughlan, said: "Hospital is not the right place to be for patients who are medically fit to leave yet need some extra support before they're able to go back to their own homes."

Richard Cattell, chief at Walsall Healthcare NHS Trust, added: "These additional beds in the community are making a significant difference to our ability to discharge people at the end of the acute phase of their treatment."

Homes plans are opposed

HUNDREDS of people have signed a petition against plans to build homes on land used by a riding school in Pheasey.

Around 300 names have been added to the online petition against the proposals at Foxhills Farm in Beacon Road, near Barr Beacon Nature Reserve.

It has been launched on the www.change.org website in opposition to the scheme which would see four homes and an access road created.

It has been lodged with Walsall Council and will be considered by the planning committee.

Mum-to-be hurt

A CAR being driven by a pregnant woman overturned and a lorry and car collided during a spate of crashes in Walsall. The Seat ended up in a ditch in Fishley Lane, Bloxwich, after rolling over at around 9.15am on Sunday. The woman managed to get out.

Dean Harper

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Walsall Golf Club would like to wish you all a very Merry Christmas and happy golfing in 2015

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Deadline for new LED lights on streets

A £250,000 project to replace street lanterns with energy efficient LED lights is expected to be completed by mid-January.

Walsall Council is replacing around 550 old-style sodium lanterns across St Matthews, Pleck and Palfrey with work having started. LED lights use less electricity, emit better light and require less maintenance and comes after a similar £750,000 investment in Bloxwich, Leamore and Brownhills.

Environment chief, councillor Lee Jeavons, said: "LED street lights not only offer exceptional lighting with substantial energy savings, but they also last longer which will help to reduce the cost of operation. Feedback from our residents in Bloxwich show that more than half of those surveyed felt that the new LED lighting worked better."

The light is whiter and brighter than traditional street lanterns, promoting public safety by improving the quality of CCTV camera images. Streets to benefit include Rutter Street, Milton Street and Dale Street in Palfrey, Southbourne Avenue, Ely Place and Madison Avenue in Pleck, Bath Road, Carless Street and Vicarage Walk in St Matthews.

Yellow lines may kill PO

NEWLY painted double yellow lines outside a post office could force the business to close, a councillor claims.

The lines appeared outside Darlaston Post Office, in Victoria Road, overnight - much to the dismay of owner Peter Badhan.

Councillor Doug James, who represents Darlaston South, said: "Painting yellow lines outside such premises may force a business to close, that is the reality of today's economic hardships."

"Maybe with a bit of common sense and goodwill the tyranny of yellow lines can be cut back a few metres."

Rebuild plans

EIGHT jobs could be created if a petrol station and shop in Willenhall is replaced with a larger one.

Euro Garages Limited has lodged plans with Walsall Council to transform the site in Wolverhampton Road West. The company bought the site from Esso.

'Progress improving' at failing schools

PUPILS' progress is improving at two schools rated inadequate in inspections last year.

Lodge Farm Junior Mixed and Infant School, in Willenhall, and Palfrey Junior School, in Walsall, were placed in special measures after being rated 'inadequate' in Ofsted inspections more than a year ago.

Inspectors carrying out follow-up inspections said the schools are taking 'reasonable steps' to come out of special measures but stressed the quality of teaching still needs to be improved. In a report about Palfrey

Junior School, inspector Peter Humphries said pupils leaving the school at the end of year six in 2014 made better progress in reading and mathematics than those leaving the school in 2013.

However, overall progress and attainment in reading, writing and mathematics at the end of year six was said to remain below national figures.

The report stated that pupils' attainment was improving because the quality of teaching is improving and attendance remains above national figures.

Inspectors said teachers' performance and the quality of pupils' learning were frequently monitored and evaluated.

Mr Humphries said: "Actions taken to challenge teachers' under-performance are swift and appropriate."

The school is working with Park Hall Junior School and Blackwood School, which are supporting the acting headteacher and helping to develop the skills of the staff.

Standards in reading at Lodge Farm was said to have improved, but more able pupils were still not challenged enough, according

to inspector Angela Westington. A recently published report said standards in mathematics remained low and were not improving quickly enough.

But it added: "The quality of teaching is not yet good enough to ensure that pupils make more rapid progress nor to eradicate the significant gaps in what they know, can do and understand." Ms Westington said behaviour and attendance had improved, while absence figures continue to decline. Leadership and management were also said to have improved.

Dozens of cannabis plants seized after raid by police

DOZENS of cannabis plants have been seized following a raid on a flat in Walsall.

It comes days after it emerged that more than 9,000 plants with a street value of £4.5 million were destroyed by West Midlands Police in just one month. The latest haul was discovered at the premises, Mellish Road, on Monday afternoon after officers went to deal with a separate incident.

West Midlands Police said no-one was present inside the property near the Arboretum when they went there at about 3pm.

It comes as the force cannabis team revealed that in total across the region 9,283 plants were collected and destroyed last month by the Cannabis Disposal Team - making it one of the most successful months for the unit since it was formed.

So far this year, several hundred cannabis farms have been dismantled in the West Midlands compared to a total of 277 in 2013. It takes the team's tally to almost 2,000 since it was formed at the end of 2010 and means drugs with a street value in excess of £120 million have been seized.

The haul includes a harvest of more than 1,100 plants from a property, in Wolverhampton Street, Dudley, worth £500,000.

Around 4,000 were found after a report that there had been a break-in at a lock-up premises on the Old Forge Trading Estate, in Dudley Road, Lye.

by Deborah Hardiman

Officers also discovered a cannabis factory when firefighters were alerted to a property fire, in Vernon Road, Oldbury, where crews found the whole top floor of the address had been converted to cultivate the drugs and 55 plants were discovered.

A cannabis factory was also located in Inkberrow Close, Oldbury, following another property fire, while 430 plants were found at a property in Amberley Grove, Wotton, after British Gas applied for a warrant at the premises.

In Pendeford, Wolverhampton, 20 cannabis plants were found under cultivation in a bedroom at an address, in Bebbington Close. Two men, aged 27 and 23, were arrested at the scene and on suspicion of producing cannabis.

The cannabis team has proved so successful that the initiative has been copied by other forces including Merseyside.

Fares to go up by 5pc

BUS fare increases of around five per cent are on the way for commuters in the Black Country. Bosses at National Express last increased fares a year ago. The new charges come into effect in January and will see an adult single rise from £2.10 to £2.20. Extra cash brought in will help pay for 171 new buses which will roll out onto the roads in the next year, according to transport chiefs. Daysavers and travelcards are also on the rise.

Showmen must go on, with revamp



Workmen continuing at their refurbishment project at the new Wetherspoons pub, The Bloxwich Showman

WITH its welcoming cream walls and gleaming wooden furniture, the £1.5 million transformation of a former cinema into a pub looks like being a blockbuster.

This is the first look at the work to convert the old Electric Palace into the Bloxwich Showman which is ahead of schedule for its planned late January opening.

JD Wetherspoon is transforming the Bloxwich High Street building, which has been standing empty for years, into the new-look pub.

Workers are now busy pushing

ahead with the refurbishment with the main bar area now in place, along with the stairs.

Up to 45 jobs are expected to be created as part of the scheme which was approved by Walsall Council's planning committee.

Famous

The name of the pub takes its inspiration from King of Showmen Pat Collins who helped set up the famous fun fair and was also a mayor and MP for Walsall.

NEWS IN BRIEF

Students get a feel for working

MORE than a dozen pupils from a school in Walsall were given an insight into working for a living thanks to The Midcounties Co-operative.

The society has provided 180 youngsters aged 14 to 24 taking part in the scheme in the last 12 months.

In Walsall, 14 pupils from The Walsall Academy were invited to The Midcounties Co-operative food, pharmacy and travel outlets in the town.

The students were given the opportunity to learn new skills first-hand.

Motorists' speeds clocked by council

THE speed of motorists along a mile-long road in Smethwick is being monitored after residents made calls for measures to slow down traffic.

Residents on Norman Road have sent a petition to Sandwell Council for a traffic calming scheme.

They also want a pedestrian crossing.

In response, the council has been conducting the speed checks on motorists. If it is found to be a problem, the issue will be passed onto police.

Soup-er festive time for centre

SOUP and bread rolls are on the menu at a celebration of festive tunes at a Darlaston worship centre. Music performed in a variety of styles will be staged at All Saints' church, in Walsall Street, on December 13 at 7pm.

Tickets are £5 for the Christmas Cracker show. There is free entry for up to two children per adult. Bookings are also available on 01922 496573.

New plans sent in for housing

FRESH plans for more than a dozen new homes on a car sales site in Walsall have been lodged.

A total of 14 three-bedroom properties would be built on land at Bournevale Motors, Lichfield Road, Shelfield, if the scheme gets the go-ahead. A previous scheme for eight homes on the site was approved three years ago.

Gripes on bikers

POLICE patrols have been stepped up after complaints about off-road bikers around Shelfield and Rushall. Concerns have been raised about the area at the fields of Fordbrook Lane and Pelsall Lane.

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THE BEST OF PETER RHODES



THE tree fellers took down an old oak at the end of the road and invited us to help ourselves. So for the first time in years we hauled home ye old yule log and placed it by the front door as a sign of welcome. Snag is, people keep tripping over it, so it's not so much a yule log as a yule catch your foot on that log.

I HAVE decided to call our yule log The Miliband after Weird Ed was this week denounced by an unnamed posse of Labour malcontents. They claim he is "a liability on the doorstep."

I ADMIT our yule log cannot compete with the festive suggestion from BBC Gardener's World magazine - a wreath made of sprouts. I suggest you hang it on your door to greet visitors with the motto: "Look what the wind blew in."

MEANWHILE, from A Christmas Carol, published in 1843, Ebenezer Scrooge offers his thoughts on the Chancellor's 2014 autumn statement: "What's Christmas time for you but a time for paying bills without money?"

TWO of my neighbours with grandchildren have seen the new Paddington film and both report a) it is far too good for kids and b) when the film ended everyone applauded.

A READER reports the following: 1) cost of replacing broken zip in daughter's school skirt, £14. Cost of two new identical school skirts at local supermarket, £8. Thanks to globalisation, the old motto "make do and mend" has become make do and spend. It no longer makes sense to repair anything.

LORD Harries of Pentregarth, a senior bishop in the Church of England, says Prince Charles's coronation service should have a reading from the Koran. It seems likely that invitations will be sent to Islamic, Hindu, Buddhist and Jewish leaders. But hell, why stop there? Let's have a coronation that fully reflects the diverse beliefs of this great nation. I want Shakers, Quakers, Scientologists and druids. I want a foyeast by elves and fairies, synchronised yoga by leprechauns and military drill by serried ranks of Jedi knights. I want witches and pagans and a special Coronation promise by the tooth fairy, a recitation by Prince Charles' talking shrubs, a sermon for atheists by Richards Dawkins and a reading by Psychic Sally ("I'm getting someone called Victoria, your majesty. She says she's very proud of you"). I suspect Charles' reign will be a batty sort of affair so let's start as he means to go on.

APPARENTLY we haven't quite got Black Friday right. We Brits love to mimic the Yanks and we have managed to do the whooping, cheering, door ramming and fist-fighting for cut-price goods. But a reader who knows the States tells me in American cities it is traditional to carry your cut-price goods as far as your car where they are taken off you by armed gangs. Maybe we'll do that next year, eh? One reader finds nothing at all amusing in Black Friday. "If there was a food shortage now," she says, "there would be no orderly queues as during the Second World War, just anarchy."

"NOW regions demand the same powers as Scotland," trumpeted one headline this week on the alleged enthusiasm for devolved power in England. I don't know a single normal person who cares tuppence about it. On closer inspection, the "regions" demanding greater powers (according to the headline) turn out to be not normal people but council leaders. No surprises there. The eagerness of bigwigs to become even biggerwigs knows no bounds.

Don't miss Peter Rhodes every Monday to Friday in your Express & Star

School considering academy status

A STRUGGLING school in Willenhall has applied to become an academy after it was ordered to improve by Ofsted.

The Department for Education today confirmed it had received an application from Pool Hayes Arts and Community School.

But teachers at the site in Castle Drive said nothing was set in stone and they were considering many

options. Pool Hayes was labelled as "requiring improvement" by Ofsted in September last year.

Headteacher Matt Allman said staff and governors had now expressed an interest in becoming an academy. It would mean the school would be publicly funded and independent of the council. Pool Hayes would also be able to set pay and conditions for staff, change the

length of terms and not follow the national curriculum.

"It is one thing we are considering," Mr Allman said. "Nothing is set in stone. We've expressed an interest in finding out more about it."

He added that there were a number of reasons why the school was considering becoming an academy but would not be drawn any further. The September Ofsted report said

too few students in English and maths were making the progress they were capable of by the end of Year 11. Students' achievement was described as too variable between subjects and the quality of teaching was not consistently good.

Inspectors said the sixth form also required improvement because the progress of its students was not good enough.

Charity jobs under threat in cutbacks

TEN jobs at a community organisation that runs youth projects and activities for older residents in Walsall face the axe under proposed council cuts, it has been revealed.

Youth workers employed by charity Bloxwich Community Partnership, that also operates the Stan Ball Centre for the over 50s, have been told positions are at risk.

Bosses said the move follows council budget cutbacks, which will also reduce the number of services offered at its three sites.

Walsall Council leader Sean Coughlan said no decision has yet been made, and he is due to visit the partnership on December 15 to discuss the situation.

The centres attract 4,000 people per month to youth and holiday clubs, outreach projects, a daily luncheon club, sports and education classes. This year the organisation received £165,785 from the council, including £135,000 for youth projects run from the Electric Palace, in Elmore Row, and at Blakenall Community Centre, in Blakenall Row.

A further £30,785 covers community development and events, including at the Stan Ball Centre, in Abbotts Street.

Bloxwich Community Partnership chief executive Eleanor Boycott said: "We are a charity, but we get this funding from the council to undertake the work. This means a great deal of

by Deborah Hardiman

what we do will be affected by the cuts, in particular our youth activities. We feel any reduction in funding will have a knock-on effect on other organisations in this area. There will be a rise in anti-social behaviour, which will add to pressure on police services and Walsall Housing Group.

"We also employ a lot of people in this neighbourhood whose jobs will be affected, not just the 10 youth workers whose jobs are under threat."

But Councillor Coughlan said: "We are fully aware of the impact. This has been forced on us by the Government cuts, but we have got to do what we think is best right across Walsall. Consultation is under way and the outcome will be known in February."

"The cabinet members have been visiting groups around the borough and I have arranged to visit the partnership on December 15."

High Sheriff £8k gift

THE High Sheriff of the West Midlands visited Walsall's Mayor in his parlour to hand over a donation of thousands of pounds towards his charity appeal.

Dr Tim Watts visited Councillor Pete Smith to deliver the cheque for £8,000. Councillor Smith said: "I am extremely grateful for this generous contribution from the High Sheriff. During his one year term of office, he has demonstrated his full support to the Lord Mayors and mayors of his shire. I am particularly grateful for the support he has given to me as the mayor of Walsall at various events, Walsall being a borough for which he has great affection."

Singing postie delivers top



Service with a song – postman Nathan Farrell, from Bloxwich, has reached the final

SINGING postman Nathan Farrell has beaten off competition from 30,000 other hopefuls to make the last 22 in a worldwide bid for the chance to perform at London's O2 Arena. He joins others from around the globe, including China, Russia, Canada, Jamaica and Australia, in reaching the penultimate stage in the contest, organised by International Open Mic.

They will hear later this month whether they have made the final 14. The 28-year-old from Bloxwich was overjoyed at the

news. He said: "I've been entering competitions for the last five years and this is by far my biggest achievement."

To reach this far, the enterprising postie has been feeding organisers with a selection of videos of him performing. He has also had to compile a biography and list his achievements. Fans of his work are invited to email openmic-auditions@europe.com and cast their vote. His voting registration number is 10001A452. The deadline for votes is December 15.

Hospital to bring in extra beds for winter

STAFF levels will be boosted and extra beds made available to help cope with winter pressures at Walsall Manor Hospital, claims a new report.

A winter plan had been drawn up by bosses at Walsall Healthcare NHS Trust, which includes creating capacity for an additional 30 bed unit, which is expected to become operational next month.

A report to the Trust board said there were also plans to increase porters by adding six staff to allow for greater flexibility and rapid response during periods of significant pressure.

Until the new 30-bed unit is opened next month, extra beds will be provided on other wards where necessary, including ward eight, 20c and the endoscopy ward would be utilised as a last resort.

The situation is expected to be kept under constant review.

The report to the Trust board said: "Opening of additional capacity beds will not be taken as a last minute decision, but reviewed formally by capacity team and site manager throughout the day and night."

"Opportunities to close these additional beds will be considered regularly."

Factory strike vote over pay

WORKERS at a historic Darlaston screw factory are threatening strike action over pay.

Staff at Caparo Atlas Fastenings Ltd, which has been manufacturing for 120 years, will hold a ballot later this month after claims the management withdrew a two per cent pay award.

Unite the union said its members at the Heath Road site, which manufactures metal fixings, had requested a vote on the matter. And this will be carried out by a private firm.

Caparo Atlas Fastenings Ltd declined to comment.

Route closed

A MAIN cut-through route into Walsall town centre has re-opened for the busy Christmas period. North Street has been shut since October for rebuilding and raising the height of the rail bridge. The route is expected to remain open until January 5.

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Summits on future of town libraries

UNDER-FIRE Walsall council chiefs will hold a public meeting and drop-in sessions with readers over the future of eight libraries earmarked for the axe.

The borough's draft budget plan lists sites in Pheasey, Streetly, Beechdale, South Walsall in Delves, and Walsall Wood for closure next year to save £565,722 to £385,092. While three others in Blakenall, New Invention and Rushall will close the following year to save £180,630 if the proposals get the green light.

The public meeting will be held on Saturday at Walsall Central Library, in Lichfield Street, Walsall, from 10am to 12pm. Seats are limited and must be booked on 01922 650322.

Drop in sessions were due to take place all this week, including tonight, Thursday at Pheasey Library, Collingwood Drive, Pheasey, from 10am to midday and tomorrow at South Walsall Library, West Bromwich Road, Delves, from 2.30pm to 4.30pm; Streetly Library, Blackwood Road, Streetly, from 2.30pm to 4.30pm; December 16 at Blakenall Library, in Thames Road, 10am to midday; and December 17 at Walsall Wood Library, in Coppice Road from 2.30pm to 4.30pm.

Choir getting all festive

A CHOIR will be performing a Christmas concert.

The Marston Singers will play at St Joseph's Church, Colway Road, Wolverhampton, on December 20.

Doors open at 7.30pm and the choir will be accompanied by the City of Wolverhampton Brass Band.

Member Pam Wall said: "It is a great way to get into the Christmas mood with a little bit of a music, and a good way to sit down and relax with a nice mince pie."

Tickets cost £6 and can be bought by calling Gill Whitaker on 01902 787963, or on the door.

Cafe on the way

A DISCOUNT shop in Aldridge town centre will be turned into a cafe, bringing a number of new jobs. LCP Securities Ltd has been given the go-ahead by Walsall Council to turn 99p World at Anchor Parade, into a cafe and are now seeking a tenant.

Baths all set for £150,000 transformation

A SWIMMING baths is to undergo a £150,000 revamp in the latest move to transform leisure centres in Walsall.

Darlaston Leisure Centre will undergo refurbishment to spruce up the building when cash is secured by Walsall Council.

It comes as Oak Park and Bloxwich leisure centres are to be rebuilt and Walsall Gala Baths transformed in a bid to improve facilities across the borough.

Darlaston's pool in Victoria Road is near 15 years old but a revamp, subject to cash being available in next year's budget, will restore tired areas, refresh facilities and upgrade maintenance.

Leisure chief councillor Khizar Hussain said: "The scheme represents a refit and cosmetic uplift of Darlaston Swimming Pool, which will be 15 years old next year.

"The proposal covers a range of works typical to a facility that age; the intention is to freshen the centre's appearance, improve some facilities that are approaching the end of their life and address some underlying maintenance issues.

"This scheme is part of Walsall Council's ongoing commitment to improving leisure facilities including the rebuilding of Oak Park and Bloxwich leisure centres and the proposals to invest in Walsall Gala Baths.

"This will help achieve the council's goal of getting more people, more active, more often." The main Walsall Gala Baths is poised to get a £1 million makeover after plans were revived – despite the need to make millions of savings in the next year.

Firm plans are now being drawn up and are set to include a changing village, sauna room, extended fitness suite and pool improvements.

The prospect of transforming the outdated Tower Street site, which dates back more 50 years, was first raised last year.

But the former Conservative-led council then revealed it was looking at the option

of replacing the Gala Baths and creating a new swimming pool and multi-storey car park complex.

However, the now controlling Labour group is looking to maintain the building as part of the 2015/16 budget.

The new leisure centres at Oak Park and Bloxwich form part of a £24m scheme to create modern facilities across the borough. Work is starting in the coming months and it is hoped they will both be fully operational in 2016.

Multi-lane pools and a range of fitness equipment are planned as part of the ambitious projects.

Thousands have their say over £68m council cuts

MORE than 3,600 people have voiced their views in a consultation launched by Walsall Council into controversial cuts of £86 million.

People have the power to influence where the axe will fall, with proposed parking charges thrown out last week. The council made a u-turn on plans to introduce charges in free car parks from April in Aldridge, Bloxwich, Brownhills, Darlaston and Wilehall.

Trust ranked highly in care survey

A HEALTH trust which cares for patients which mental health condition has been ranked highly in new surveys.

Dudley and Walsall Mental Health Partnership NHS Trust scored among the top 20 per cent trusts in the country for patients experience.

Patients rating their experience as 'good or very good' in the Care Quality Commission Community Mental Health Survey.

In the same survey, 75 per cent of those who responded reported they felt they were treated with dignity and respect.

Nine out of 10 reported they felt their health or social care worker listened to them carefully, according to findings. Results from the National Mental Health Inpatient Survey were also positive, according to trust bosses.

The trust scored significantly higher than the national average for patients feeling welcome on the ward and hospital cleanliness.

Visit the CQC website to view the full survey.

The consultation started in October after the council revealed it needed to make £29m in savings next year and £86m over four years due to cutbacks in Whitehall funding.

The plans include closing 12 children's centres, several libraries, cutting the opening hours of tips and scaling back public events such as bonfires.

Leader of Walsall Council, Councillor Sean Coughlan, said: "This is Walsall's biggest budget consultation ever.

"The breadth and scale of the budget cuts this year is far greater than in any previous year and is reflected in the wide and varied programme of consultation work that we are undertaking. Consulting the public on our draft budget proposals is a key part of the council's decision making process and we are committed to listening and understanding the views of anyone who lives, works, visits or does business in the borough.

"This year's budget consultation is more complex than in any year previously as we have 54 policy proposals to consider and we are engaging the public through different methods so as to reach as many people as possible."

People have until January 5 to have their say on the cutbacks.

'Tin Man' island is one of the best



Taking a look at the Island which has been voted one of the top roundabouts is Mayor of Walsall Cllr Peter Smith

IT IS 'an oasis in a sea of Tarmac' dominated by a shiny 30ft high sculpture of a miner standing tall over a former colliery.

And now the roundabout at the end of the High Street in Brownhills has achieved cult status by being named runner-up in a poll of Britain's 10,000 traffic islands.

The 'tin man' roundabout, as it is known to locals, will feature as 'November' in the world-wide selling calendar, Best of British Roundabouts

2015. The five-ton, £70,000 artwork, features a giant metal sculpture of a 19th-century miner holding a lamp and pick. The artwork commemorates the pitmen who worked in the town for three centuries before the last Brownhills mine closed.

Its new quirky status has been bestowed by the UK Roundabout Appreciation Society. Congratulating the town, Kevin Beresford, president of UKRAS, said: "I personally feel this terrific traffic island perfectly sums up

what is so charming about the great British one-way gyratory."

Mr Beresford, also known as Lord of the Rings, said: "A roundabout is an oasis in a sea of Tarmac that lifts our sagging spirits on long journeys.

Walsall mayor Pete Smith, who proudly posed on the roundabout, described it as a wonderful accolade. He said: "It's an unusual title but one the people of Walsall, and especially those living in Brownhills, can be rightly proud of."

Rosie's charity makes appeal

A CHARITY set up in honour of a teenager is collecting chocolate selection boxes for children in local hospitals at Christmas.

Rosie Ross was stabbed to death, aged 16, as she sunbathed with a friend in Birmingham's Centenary Square in 2001.

Rosie's Helping Hands has launched the appeal for chocolates and is urging people to bring their donations to the Friary Club, Whetstone Lane, Aldridge, on weekday evenings from 8pm or at weekends from midday until 11pm.

Alternatively, call Karen Ross on 01922 456398.

Santa Claus is coming to town

FATHER Christmas will be riding in his sleigh around Pelsall later this week.

He will be visiting on Friday from 6.15pm to 9.15pm.

On Saturday, his sleigh will be at Pelsall Village Centre from 4.30pm until 6pm and he will then tour Pelsall until 9.15pm.

Any housebound children who want Santa to visit them can call 01922 684695.

There will also be a collection for the Pelsall Carnival fund for next year.

Christmas tree festival at church

A CHRISTMAS tree festival will take place this week. Brownhills The Methodist Church is hosting the event on December 12 and 13, from 9am to 3pm.

There will be an official switching-on ceremony on December 11 at 7.30pm.

On December 13, there will be a Christmas mini-market in the church hall from 9am to 1.30pm. Proceeds will go to two charities.

Arsonists set fire to climbing frame

ARSONISTS have caused thousands of pounds of damage after setting fire to a climbing frame in a Tipton park.

The net on the equipment in Tibbington Play Area, off Tibbington Crescent, has been destroyed and the frame damaged.

Council bosses say the bill will run into thousands.

Fair raises £1,100

A PARISH church in Walsall raised more than a £1,100 towards its upkeep and ministry projects at its autumn fair.

Leaders at St Gabriel's in Walstead Road, Delves, thanked residents.

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It's been a crazy few months for Cloudy2Clear Windows. The company which specialises in repairing windows which are steamed up, broken or damaged by replacing the panes – not the frames has grown rapidly as homeowners take advantage of their services.

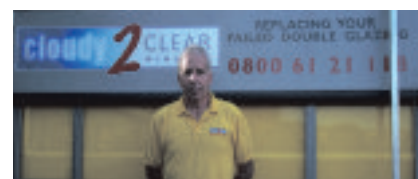
Managing Director Brian Stanley feels that it's all about service. 'Our product is simple. If your double glazing is misted up we can replace the glass at a fraction of the cost of a new window, in any type of frame, and with a new 5 year guarantee. But it's not just about saving people

money, although that obviously helps. Many tradespeople have struggled since last year and I honestly feel that during the good times a minority perhaps didn't focus on customer care as much as they should have done.

We make sure we turn up when we say we will, do the job the customer requires and leave their house as clean as a whistle. I often get comments back from customers on how they really didn't expect that sort of service which, in a way, is very sad for the service industry as a whole.'

Cloudy2Clear service Wolverhampton and the surrounding

area and Brian is finding that his approach is a major factor in his success. 'The truth is that it's not just the personal satisfaction that I get from doing a good job but also it makes good business sense. I get a huge amount of business from friends and family of people



I've done work for, which just goes to show how much a little bit of effort is appreciated.'

So, if your windows are steamed up, broken or damaged give Brian a call for a free quotation on 0800 61 21 118 and he'll be happy to help!

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IN MY VIEW

with Mark Andrews

THE Archbishop of Canterbury has come under fire for dabbling in politics regarding his comments about food banks in the UK. An MP warned the Most Rev Justin Welby that he ran the risk of becoming a pawn in a political game. I would perhaps be sympathetic to the MP's point, were the MP in question anyone other than David Mellor.

To be fair, as far as we know, he did resist from calling the Archbishop a "sweaty, stupid little s****", so clearly the man is learning. But I still do not think he is the man to be lecturing the Archbishop about matters of religion.

□□□□□

MEANWHILE, the Archbishop has also suggested we should do our Christmas shopping at charity shops. No doubt, most men will be nodding sagely in agreement, thinking this is an excellent piece of advice. Their wives may need a little more convincing.

□□□□□

OH, and if you didn't know Foggy is this year's winner of I'm A Celebrity. It's not the bloke off Last of the Summer Wine. No idea who he is, mind.

□□□□□

A Christmas card which listed '10 reasons by Santa Claus must live on a council estate' has been withdrawn from sale by Clinton Cards after sparking a storm of protests.

The reasons listed included "He has a serial record for breaking and entering", and "He only works once a year".

One indignant complainant labelled the card "seriously vile", another said it was "beyond offensive" while a third said it was "vilifying and stigmatising the poor for corporate gain".

Oh, do get over yourselves, please. Of course such stereotyping is unfair, and the card probably is in bad taste, but if we start directing so much anger at every dubious joke, what is left for the really serious stuff?

What are we going to ban next? Irish jokes? Mother-in-law gags? Benny out of Crossroads?

Let's face it, Black Country humour is based almost entirely on unfair and outdated stereotypes about flat-capped simpletons with funny accents, and we love 'em.

And earnest po-faced people who use such pompous phrases as 'stigmatising the poor for corporate gain' are invariably the sort of people who hold such prejudices against ordinary people who do not share their supposedly enlightened attitudes. If they met a real Black Country man, they would doubtless find him uncouth and politically incorrect, in need of 'educating' in the ways of modern metropolitan Britain.

Well, yo've gorra loff, as we say in the Black Country.



A stray horse along Russell's Hall Road, Dudley



Horses round up in Wolverhampton Road East, Sedgley



A bleeding Staffordshire bull terrier injured in Walsall

Owners get a kick out of cruel sport

Fears over fighting dogs and stray horses have been raised by the RSPCA. SIMON STONE reports

IT is part of the shady underworld of the Black Country, where criminals put their dogs' lives on the line in the name of sport.

Dogs are bought and sold, bred and trained all so that callous owners can get a kick from dog fighting.

And, says the RSPCA, the region has seen 'more than its fair share' of cases. Ian Briggs, chief inspector with the RSPCA special operations unit, has been working on dog fighting cases for 15 years and is in no doubt it still goes on.

"Since 2006, the West Midlands has really had more than its fair share of dog fighting cases," he said. "There have definitely been dog fights held in Wolverhampton and other areas of the Black Country as well."

One high-profile case, in 2008, saw Stephen Wood from Walsall convicted of having four pit bull dogs for the purpose of training them for fighting.

Abandoned

In 2010, dog fighting was said to be on the rise in the Black Country after a spate of seriously injured dogs were found abandoned.

A dog believed to have been beaten to death was found dead under a paving slab in Chaucer Road, Bloxwich in January, while a bleeding Staffordshire bull terrier called Honey limped into a Walsall tyre and exhaust unit in Fryers Road, Bloxwich, after being badly injured in a dog fight weeks later.

A two-year-old female Staffie-type was found dying on a towpath in Bentley, and a dog named Rocky suffering from 'the worst case of neglect' ever seen by local vets was rescued from Churchill



Richard Marshall with trees used to train fighting dogs in Bearwood Park

Road in Bentley. Elsewhere, a dead Staffordshire bull terrier was found in a box in Newhall Road, Rowley Regis, while a dead pit bull terrier covered in blood was dumped on a busy street in Smethwick.

Concerns have also been raised that thugs are training fighting dogs in Black Country parks. Chunks of bark have been ripped off trees in King George V playing fields in Bloxwich and in Bearwood Park.

Other concerns relate to stray horses, often left to fend for themselves on

verges and scrubland, chained to trees and stakes in all weathers. Sometimes they are left to die.

Horses have been found dead, in poor condition and even literally frozen to their spot by chains around their necks in the winter. There is also the illegal act of fly-grazing, leaving horses to graze on someone else's land.

Sandwell councillor Ian Jones said: "There have been cases of horses frozen to the spot by their chain. We have had fly-grazed horses choking on their chains and have had to be rescued."

Horses can also create problems for pedestrians and drivers if they escape and make their way onto footpaths and roads.

Since 2011, more than 460 horses have been removed from public highways in Dudley alone, with the council spending £100,000 on removing them.

This year eight horses were rounded up by police after they wandered on to grassland in Wolverhampton and were agitated by traffic. The animals were herded onto the forecourt of a petrol station in Wolverhampton Road East, Sedgley.

In February, two caused a stir when they were seen near the ring road on Penn Road in Wolverhampton.

The most recent action in Dudley was taken in October when two horses were seized from council-owned land off Bryce Road, in Brierley Hill. The council also posts enforcement notices, warning anyone who may leave their horses on council-owned land that their animals may be impounded.

Tethered

In Sandwell, more than 100 horses have been removed by the council in the past three years, and the authority has spent tens of thousands of pounds on bailiffs to enforce the policy.

Pat McFadden, Wolverhampton South East MP says existing legislation does not go far enough, and that authorities do not get enough support from the government. He claimed horses were being found dead tethered to posts, or were left in such bad condition they had to be put down.

However Councillor Jones said that healthy horses impounded in Sandwell will not be put to sleep, instead being found new homes and even being used by riding schools.

Gemma Stanford, of the British Horse Society, said fly-grazing had become a massive issue across the country and the BHS has been pushing for new, tougher, new legislation.

WEEK IN POLITICS

with Daniel Wainwright

TRY as they might, politicians can't seem to convince people of the benefits of the Black Country and Birmingham teaming up.

UKIP came in for some heavy criticism when it organised a 'hands off the Black Country' protest. And whether you're of the view they're just standing up for people's shared identity or opportunistically hopping on a bandwagon, they would only be able to do so if there was an undercurrent of concern.

It might be fear of the unknown. It might be lack of trust in politicians. It could be a belief this is only the beginning of a big Brum takeover. I don't think for a second it is, but there's no getting away from genuine fears held by a lot of people.

Labour councillors have been stressing there is nothing to worry about but perception is everything. For years, the feeling has been Birmingham has done well for investment, while the Black Country has been left with the crumbs.

The combined authority technically already exists. There's a West Midlands Integrated Transport Authority. That covers the four Black Country boroughs and Birmingham, who are signed up to the combined authority plan, plus Coventry and Solihull, who the others are trying to persuade to join them.

Terms

All that's really going to be different is the venue they meet at and possibly the councillor chairing it. We've had joint working on transport for years and it's never been as big a political hot potato as this authority, which is also going to look at regeneration and job creation.

For me, part of the problem has been the name.

I don't just mean the toxic idea of Greater Birmingham, which politicians have correctly consigned to the waste paper bin.

I mean the legal terms being used - 'combined authority'.

'Combined' means to join or merge to form a single unit. That's something the Labour leaders swear won't happen to their respective councils.

An 'authority' is something with political or administrative power and control. Again, councillors are adamant there will be no new layer of bureaucracy, administration or politicians. To all intents and purposes, then, it's a group of people who get together every so often, have a meeting and discuss common aims.

But it's also a mechanism to draw and use whatever powers might be offered to the West Midlands through devolution. Failure to have the authority set up means we could fall behind - further behind - the likes of Greater Manchester.

Yet without those powers on the table many people aren't comfortable they don't yet know what is being signed up to on their behalf.

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Long-suffering town, with no let-up

SOMETIMES I despair. Sometimes I repeat to the point of it being a total bore. Nevertheless it is a fact that the borough of Walsall is suffering, from poor to awful administration, from within the town hall.

And this is not just a recent phenomenon, it has existed for many, not years, but decades.

The Office of National Statistics has published the figures on unemployment. In Walsall we have over 20,000 more people without work, than the average for other administrative areas, of the same population numbers.

Children allowed to run riot

YEARS ago we ruled our children, but now they rule us. Why? Because we are in the EU and the Human Rights Act prevents us from disciplining our children, not just parents but teachers, police or anyone.

Walk through any large store, children crying and squealing for something they want, only to do more so when they are denied.

No smack on the back of the legs or backside, that is now child abuse. Your children ring you up in desperation, pulling their hair out because their children will not stop screaming, do as they are told, or go to sleep. The Human Rights Act in this aspect is a step too far. Parents have rights also.

The problem is, that if parents cannot discipline their children, it could lead to abuse. The constant non-stop screaming, crying and attention that today's children burden their parents with could tip some parents over the edge.

A PARKER, Willenhall

Not only is this number living on benefits, it's the lack of, what should be their contribution to the community. With an illiteracy rate of one in five in the country, Walsall's illiteracy is twice that. It is estimated to cost the country £81 billion a year, which averages to £54 million for each borough council. Little wonder the demands of the Government for councils to reduce their budgets.

Walsall has the highest percentage of empty shops at 28 per cent of those available. It has the highest rate of council staff using the sick leave facility and still has 11 schools in special measures. Walsall is top of the list in the country for illiteracy resulting from generations of parents unable to be of help to their children – we need teachers that know how to teach and build children's own confidence. Walsall has the highest teen pregnancy rate.

Let's have a council, not of political party zealots, but practical people with proven man-management skills, working as a co-operative team, not giving into the priority of party politics, at the next election.

RAY HAMMOND, Aldridge

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

POST

Walsall Chronicle,
Chronicle Editorial,
51-53 Queen Street
Wolverhampton, WV1 1ES

Letters should be brief and MUST include name, address and telephone number. The Editor reserves the right to condense letters.

E-MAIL

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Breaking monopoly of the unfair pubcos

AFTER years of campaigning by Camra, the GMB union and supporting cross-party MPs, headed by Greg Mulholland, the Commons has approved a bill that will limit the power of the large pub owning companies. The pubcos merely own pubs, they are not brewers, and the bill applies only to pubcos with more than 500 pubs.

The pubco system operates by charging its tenants rents and then compelling them to buy from a limited portfolio of beer at prices as much as 70 per cent above wholesale. A tenant discovered obtaining supplies from an independent source can be heavily fined or dismissed. Against these odds should a tenant increase trade then up goes the rent.

This rotten, unfair, straight jacket of a business plan has been responsible for closing many pubs and forcing many good people out of the profession. Ideally, as with any other business, a tenant should pay an agreed rent and then be free to run that business. If approved by the Lords, the bill will go some way towards this. It will be a gradual process that, hopefully, results in reduced prices to the customer and a better income for the tenant.

The West Midlands is blessed with some of the best beers and greatest pubs in the country. This festive season get into them and drink to this bill getting through the Lords.

KEITH WATKINS, Walsall Camra

Snow way climate is changing

AS A 91-year-old cynic I'm sorry to say I cannot believe in the climate change story stuffed down our throats by the 'anti fossil fuel' brigade.

It is a story that has been swallowed it seems by the whole world. They talk of the receding snow line on one side of the Arctic Circle, but do not mention the advancing snow fields in other areas of the North Pole.

We've had unpredictable weather on this spot on the globe from the time I first remember. We've had dry, cold, wet, warm winters ditto summers. A balmy November has visited us about once every 20 years, with the daily newspapers showing us pictures of a crammed Brighton Beach. A snowy winter would occur slightly more often. I remember the snow of 1933, when my brother and I would dig tunnels through the drifts. Snow also covered the land in 1947, 1963, and so on.

I firmly believe that the world can look after itself. J L JAMES, Walsall

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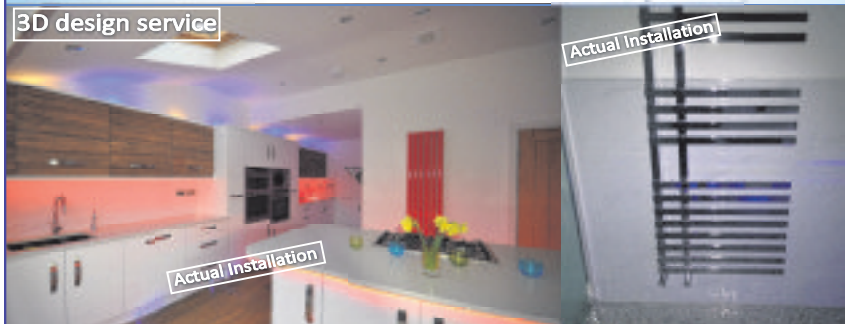
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Work starts on £5m Waterfront scheme

WORK on a £5 million apartment development that will continue to transform Walsall's Waterfront is now under way.

The 44 specially-adapted homes are being built by Walsall Housing Group, in partnership with developer Jessup, and the scheme is expected to be completed in March 2016.

The one and two-bedroom homes will be designed for older people with specific needs to help them stay independent for as long as possible and will feature wet rooms.

Carole Wildman, corporate director of growth at the housing group, said: "We are delighted to start work on this site in partnership with Jessup. The development will breathe new life into the Waterfront."

Wellbeing

"This is just one element of our development plans and we will be scaling up the amount of homes we build significantly in the coming years as we continue to regenerate Walsall."

Clive Jessup, chief executive of Jessup Build Develop, added: "We are pleased to partner with Walsall Housing Group on this wellbeing apartment development, on our national award-winning Waterfront south regeneration project."

"The wellbeing apartments will provide a fitting conclusion to the waterfront south scheme which includes apartments, housing, an NHS Birthing Unit and Talent Navigator Hub."

In completing the scheme we will continue our policy of utilising local contractors and suppliers."

Walsall Council helped support the housing group's funding bid to the Homes and Communities Agency.



Clive Jessup the director of Jessup, Councillor Mohammad Nazir, Stuart Buckley from HCA and Jayne Cooper from Walsall Housing Group

£1.4bn road boost backed

THE Tory parliamentary candidate for Walsall North has welcomed the Government's plans to pump £1.4 billion into road improvements that include an upgrade to the M6, junction 10.

It is the biggest of a total of 17 schemes to be rolled out in the West Midlands. Douglas Hansen-Luke, who will be running against Labour's veteran MP David Winnick at the general election, said: "Investment in Junction Ten will lead new jobs and open

up land for 2,500 new homes. Walsall's economy is already improving and this will boost it still further."

The programme is part of a £15bn roads investment strategy setting out how the government will invest in the roads network from 2015 to 2016 and 2020 to 2021.

More than 100 major projects are in the pipeline. Peter Shirley managing director of Willenhall firm Midland Chilled Foods, in Stringes Lane, said praised the announcement.

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Singer Laura is a hit with youngsters



Award-winning singer Laura Mvula working with the BBC Ten Pieces music project, at the school in Pelsall

IT'S not every day you get a superstar popping in to your school, but lucky primary pupils in Walsall got to get their groove on with singer Laura Mvula.

The delighted group of 140 children, aged eight and nine, took part in a classical music workshop at Ryders Hayes Community School, in Pelsall.

The Birmingham-born award-winning soul singer and her siblings Dionne and James, also musicians, took part in the session organised for the BBC Ten Pieces project. The Year Four class at the Gilpin Crescent site were also joined by youngsters from Blue Coat CE Junior based in Springhill Road, in Walsall.

The youngsters were given a treat by the singer who scored a hit with her acclaimed debut album, Sing to the Moon featuring the hit track Green Garden.

She told the pupils: "I tend to use things I care about for inspiration, like relationships and love - I love nature and one of my songs is called Green Garden."

"My favourite concerts are the main stage at Glastonbury and the Royal Albert Hall with the Metropole Orchestra."

Mvula, 28, is an ambassador for the National Foundation For Youth Music that provides music-making opportunities for children and young people.

Her sister Dionne, 24, plays the violin while brother James, 26, is a cellist. "Music education is very important for children," the singer said.



School pupils in the music workshop at Ryders Hayes School

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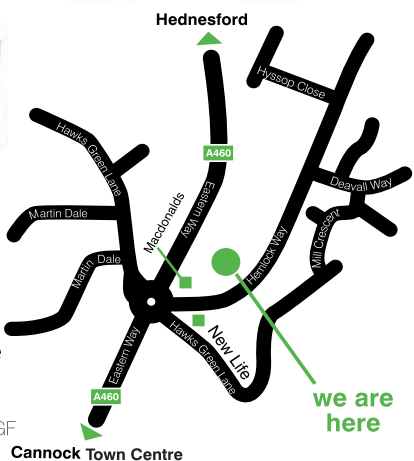
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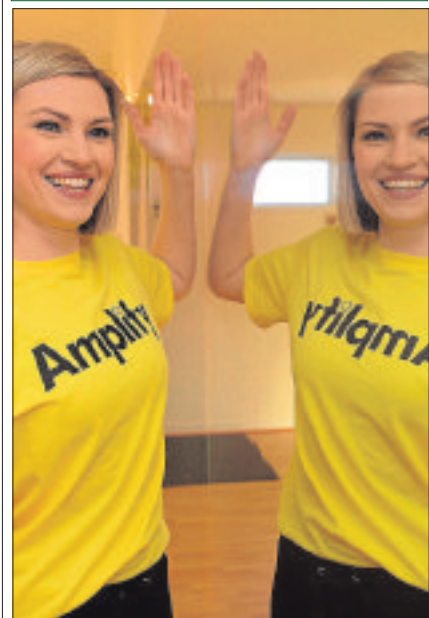
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Jemma's dancing for joy with new business



Apprentice contestant Jemma Bird launches her new
business Amplify at Red Star Park Sports & Social Club

SHE may not have won The Apprentice, but former
contestant Jemma Bird is all smiles after launching her own
business in Aldridge. Despite missing out on the chance
to be Lord Sugar's investment partner, the determined
27-year-old has pushed ahead to open her own performing
arts coaching company.

Amplify was officially launched at its base at McKechnies
Sports and Social Club in Middlesmore Lane at the week-
end. It aims to teach a range of ballet, tap and theatre while
there are also danceercise classes taking place on Saturday
and Sundays. It is available for all ages including a music
and movement for toddlers session.

In the long term, Amplify could expand to more days
and more premises. Jemma, a former University of Wol-
verhampton dance graduate, made it through to the 20
candidates who have appeared on the BBC show this series.

She said she was excited about the opportunity to launch
the business, with finishing touches being made up to the
night before the grand opening.

Manor gets £360k fine on targets for waiting

**THE Manor Hospital has been fined more
than £360,000 in just over six months after
A&E patients were kept waiting too long.**

The fine for Walsall Healthcare NHS Trust, which
is facing ever-increasing pressure from rising admis-
sions, is for failing to reach the national four-hour
target for seeing 95 per cent of people.

The total bill issued by
Walsall Clinical Commis-
sioning Group from the
start of April to the end of
October was £365,400.

It comes as bosses at the
hospital have been told to
reduce emergency admis-
sions by 3.2 per cent as part
of £24m funding plans.

The Manor has been faced
with more patients coming
from Staffordshire and has
been failing to meet the
A&E target throughout this
year. Steps are being taken
to address the problem, with
up 100 extra nurses being
recruited and long-term
multi-million pounds plans
to revamp the department.

The CCG said contractual
fines are only one part of a
number of ways in which
it works with the trust to
tackle waiting times. These
fines are re-invested in the
health system to improve

by Craig Hughes

services for Walsall pa-
tients. Ian Baines, director
of finance and performance,
said: "We have had an ex-
tremely busy year with an
increased number of people
attending Manor Hospital,
including patients from
Staffordshire who are now
coming to Walsall for treat-
ment."

"Unfortunately, this does
impact on our capacity and
this means some patients
are not seen as quickly as
they should."

"We are disappointed
that in October we nar-
rowly missed the target of
95 per cent of patients at-
tending our emergency de-
partment being seen within
four hours. We continue to
work hard with our partner
services."

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A natural history of Christmas

Wolverhampton Women's Luncheon Club

THERE were 80 members present at the November 26 meeting at The Lindens, Tettenhall Road, together with 13 guests and the speaker Dr Michael Leach.

After welcoming everyone, the chairman asked for a short silence in memory of Margaret Arnold, a past member, who died recently. She then said Grace. The menu was celery and stilton soup, roast turkey with trimmings, Christmas pudding with brandy sauce, tea or coffee with mints and mince pies.

After the lunch, Susan introduced Dr Leach. The title of his talk was 'The Natural History of Christmas'. A zoologist, full-time wildlife author and photographer, Dr Leach has filmed animals all over the world.

He said there is not sufficient evidence to guess with any accuracy the year of Jesus' birth, although it seems it was somewhere between 7 BC and 2 AD.

He said the modern Christmas started with the Victorians and explained the origins of mistletoe and the yule log and the introductions of mince pies, turkey and Brussels sprouts.

He concluded by referring to the 'The Twelve days of Christmas'. Suzanne Morgan gave the vote of thanks.

The AGM will be held on Wednesday, January 28. Only paid up members should attend. The menu for the next luncheon will be cream of asparagus soup, pork in red wine, lemon sponge and custard.

Show cast sails the good ship lollipop



The Great Wyrley Townswomen's Guild variety show cast

GREAT Wyrley Townswomen Guild presented an old time variety concert at Great Wyrley Methodist Church to raise funds for their chosen charity, which this year is Acorns children's hospice in Walsall.

The concert was compered by the wonderful Leonard Sachs, aka Pauline Benton.

The show comprised a mixture of comedy acts that included sketches, songs and sing-a-long in the old music hall style.

Songs included Underneath the Lamp-

Great Wyrley TG

light, Oh you Beautiful Doll and Good Ship Lollipop. The final was a rousing rendition of We'll Meet again.

The ensemble was assisted by several husbands and partners who ensured a smooth organised evening, and a good time was had by all.

Popular guest's enthralling talk

Dudley South Ladies Luncheon Club

THE club enjoyed an excellent November lunch at the Kingfisher Hotel, Wall Heath.

This was followed by a popular return visit from Sue Clegg whose talk "Waterborne in the Grenadines" enthralled members for 45 minutes.

Sue is a retired policewoman who is an expert on finger printing.

She received a Gold Award from the Duke of Edinburgh in 1970 and when she retired she was interviewed successfully along with other Gold achievers

to form a team of six. They were trained and sent out to the Caribbean islands to join award winners selected from other countries in order promote and introduce young people to the Duke of Edinburgh Award Scheme.

The team found themselves "waterborne" on the "Grenadine Star" sailing out to the Grenadines with basic supplies in their backpacks and two dinghies.

On arrival, they all ran into the blue sea and invited

the young people to join them. No one followed. Not one youngster could swim.

Eventually the team took them to an uninhabited island for a 24-hour survival test which ended in helping rescue survivors from an air crash.

This flight between islands had ended in disaster but as a result the youngsters achieved their Duke of Edinburgh award. Sue now travels throughout the world promoting the award scheme.

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FOCUS ON BLOXWICH

A Quick look back at 100 years for Doris

A MOTHER-OF-TWO, who grew up in Bloxwich and spent years volunteering at a group for the blind, has marked her 100th birthday.

Doris Quick, who now lives at the Richmond Hall Care Home, Aldridge, marked her big day by holding a party with her close family in attendance.

The second of 10 children, the then Doris Sedgwick grew up in Bloxwich before leaving school at the age of 14 and getting a job calibrating electrical instruments.

Doris married her husband George Quick on September 19, 1936, at Bloxwich parish church and the couple moved in to a house in Carter Road, Great Barr.

Centenarian

Mr Quick died aged 87 in 1957, but Doris continued to live in the couple's house until 2011.

Doris and George had two daughters - Lorna and Sheila - and the centenarian now has four grandchildren and eight great-grandchildren.

She returned to work after she got a job in a glove factory in Tantarra Street, Walsall, in 1949, where she stayed for about five years.

In later life Doris suffered from glaucoma and underwent an operation.

But she was so inspired by the experience that she decided to



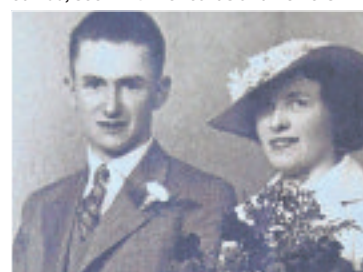
Doris Quick who has turned 100, seen with her cards and flowers

help at the blind club which is based at Great Barr Methodist church.

Her proud daughter Lorna said: "It made her realise how precious her sight was so she wanted to do something to help other people."

Lorna added that it was a great achievement for her mother to reach 100 and said: "She was always very good at needlework and knitting and made most of our clothes herself."

"She was really very adaptable and was never bored when she was at home."



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Pathway snaps up ex-home of Jerome



Rob Watts, left, from C P Bigwood with Safaraz Ali, right and Hamait Ali at the Lichfield Street property

THE former home of author Jerome K Jerome in Walsall has changed hands. The house – 23 Lichfield Street – where the Three Men in a Boat writer was born in 1859 has been bought by apprenticeship training and recruitment providers, The Pathway Group.

The group is expanding its Walsall operations. It already works from two locations in the town centre and the new one, which offers more than 5,000 sq ft, will offer facilities for training for health and social care and leadership and management.

In a deal brokered by chartered surveyors CPBigwood, the organisation has bought the house in Lichfield Street virtually next door to its existing operation at 18 Lichfield Street and its facility in Bridge Street.

The premises became available after being vacated by law firm Addison O'Hare following its merger with Enoch Evans. The group has its headquarters in Birmingham and other offices including in Wolverhampton.

£34k falsely claimed by mother of crash victim

A 75-YEAR-OLD woman falsely claimed over £34,000 benefits while receiving payments for looking after her disabled daughter.

Sufraj Begum of Birmingham Road, Walsall, received pension credit benefits over nine years from 2004 until 2013 and will have to sell her home to pay back the money.

She had filled out a form in March 2005 declaring she was entitled to the payments but failed to mention she was receiving £230 every fortnight to look after her daughter who suffered injuries following a car crash.

Wolverhampton Crown Court was told on Monday that her application for benefits requested she receive back pay of the pension credit from 2004.

Mr Richard Dewsbury, prosecuting, said: "After she filled out her form she was visited by the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) and asked if the information was correct and to state if she was receiving any additional payment.

"Her son was present and was acting as an interpreter. She failed to mention dur-

by Adam Thompson

ing the time she claimed the benefits she received £230 per fortnight as an employed carer for her adult daughter. The payments were made electronically and into a different account the DWP was paying benefits into. In total she was overpaid by £34,677. She said that she couldn't remember the full details of filling out the form."

The court was told that after the false claims were discovered, she began paying the money back and has so far contributed £792. Mr David Switherton, defending, said that the pensioner will have to sell a second home. He said: "Her family have made arrangements for the money to be paid back."

Carol service due at church

WALSALL'S deputy mayor will take part in a carol service at a church near the town. Councillor Angela Underhill will read part of the Christmas story from the Bible at the event at All Saints' Church, in Foley Road East, in Streetly, at 5.30pm on Sunday. Other civic engagements this week include a visit by the mayor Councillor Pete Smith to St Thomas More Catholic School's presentation evening at the site in Darlaston Lane, Willenhall, on Thursday at 6.30pm.



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Snow being dumped in Wolverhampton, February, 1947



Tarmac Ltd help thaw a road in Cannock on February 10



Workman laying a new sewer in Lower Gornal in 1947



Skaters at Dartmouth Park, West Bromwich, in 1963

Hidden depths of a snowy winter

WITH blizzards, snowstorms and freezing conditions having swept across North America, many older people will have thought 'we're for it next'.

For so often in the past, harsh weather conditions in the USA have been the harbinger of bitter cold and heavy snowfalls here in Britain. And with such thoughts whirling around our minds, memories often turn to the worst winters we have endured.

For me it was the winter of 1962-63. I was just six but still have vivid memories of that most icy of times. Heavy snow began falling on Boxing Day and soon afterwards fierce blizzards transformed the landscape, covering it with massive snowdrifts. Then came the big freeze.

I remember but when my Mom and Dad talked about bad winters they always highlighted the winter of 1947 and that is the one that June M Lloyd brings to mind.

She writes: "One night I found myself unable to sleep. Sitting down, sipping a hot drink my mind drifted back to my childhood. I was

MEMORY LANE

by Carl Chinn

eleven years old and lived with my parents and four sisters and brothers at 12 Bristol Hall Lane, Warley, Worcestershire, now known as Sandwell. The war was over but everything was still rationed. Mom had books of coupons for food, clothes, fuel. Well I awoke one morning to find there was deep snow everywhere.

"I looked out of my bedroom window; the snow was so deep it was right over people's front doors and windows. I woke my sister Sheila who was nine years old and told her to come and look.

"She was so scared when she saw the snow, that she ran downstairs crying for mom. I followed her downstairs to the kitchen, mom, dad and my other brothers and sisters were crammed into the kitchen.

"There was a roaring fire which kept sizzling as the snow melted above the chimney. How would we get out to the toilet? I asked mom, she said, 'You will have to use the white bucket in the bathroom until your dad and I try to unblock the back door.'"

"Dad tried to clear a path to the coal house using the coal shovel we kept near the fireplace. Then my older brothers started to help him. It was like living in a snow house, I read about those at school. Dad and my brothers worked hard all that day and finally made a path to the coalhouse and toilet. The snow was piled so high you couldn't see the back garden.

"We could hear Mr Fletcher next door doing the same thing. There was a lot of cussing going on. Mr Fletcher's chickens were buried alive under the snow. He later shared them with us neighbours.

Struggled

"All the men and boys worked hard in our street all that day and the next day trying to make a path to the 'Two Brewers', a pub at the bottom of our street, and to Mrs Smith's grocery shop.

"It was so eerie walking between those banks of snow. "I struggled back with the shopping, mainly tinned food, flour, butter, lard, bread and candles. It was a good job Mrs Smith had received a delivery the day before the snow came down. The radio came on and they said more snow was coming. No-one could go to work as the roads were blocked.

"The radio came on at eight o'clock that night warning people not to use their gas. This was in case they blew up. There were icicles on the windows upstairs so we couldn't sleep there.

"We dragged some mattresses downstairs to sleep on. The boys on one and us girls on the other. We had blankets over us as it was too cold upstairs. I think mom and dad slept in the bathroom."

June adds: "Mom banked the kitchen fire up with wet slack so it would stay in all night. We slept in the front room downstairs; it was so cold even our dog, Gyp, slept on our bed at night.

"We had to be careful with the food as there were no deliveries to the shop; no-one could get to work as there were no buses running.

"We listened to the radio for the news every night and played cards to pass the time. We had porridge for breakfast with salt on; dinner was powdered eggs, and bread and lard. The main meals were eaten by the grown-ups although we had soup and bread made from the chicken or rabbit bones.

"I remember dad breaking up some chairs and the wardrobe vanished from our bedroom to keep the fire going. We played out in the

snow tunnels sometimes, but not for long as it was so cold. All the neighbours helped each other and shared what food they had.

"Finally the council men were able to clear the main roads so that people could go back to work. Bread was brought round on a sledge pulled by a horse, fresh bread from Grant's bakery, it tasted wonderful.

"My brother Stan and I had to go to the coal yard at Smethwick to get some coal and coke. We had to pawn dad's suit first to get some money and I had to do mom's shopping on the slate until the wages were paid. It was hard work as the pavements weren't clear.

"It was very hard work helping my brother to push the pram full of wet coal and coke back home through the snow; still he did give me a ride in the pram going there.

"There was no schools open yet it was great fun building snowmen and throwing snowballs at each other. It wasn't dark at night either as the snow made everywhere lighter. The only sounds you heard over those weeks were the men clearing the snow away and us children shouting to one another.

"Otherwise it was so quiet; no birds were singing or flying around. I've never seen snow like that before and hope I never do again!"

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Bell sounds for the graduates' march



Walsall unofficial Town Crier Cyril Richardson

MORE than 120 graduates wearing caps and gowns brought traffic in Walsall town centre to a standstill as they took part in a procession to town hall.

Unofficial town crier Cyril Richardson led the way as the Walsall College parade made its way along Park Street and Bridge Street before arriving at the grade II listed building, in Leicester Street.

More than 450 guests attended the ceremony to see the students receive certificates for courses, such as, Higher National Diplomas (HNDs), Higher National Certificates (HNCs) and foundation. Seven special awards were also presented to students for excelling in their work.

The afternoon was rounded off with refreshments at Jerome's Restaurant at the college's main campus in Littleton Street West. Walsall College's principal and chief executive Jatinder Sharma said: "The 2014 higher education graduation ceremony represented a celebration of our highest achieving students to date and they are now role models within their communities."

Axe hangs over jobs for group of workers

TEN jobs at a community organisation that runs youth projects and activities for older residents in Walsall face the axe under proposed council budget cuts.

Youth workers employed by charity Bloxwich Community Partnership that also operates the Stan Ball Centre for the over 50s, have been told their positions are at risk.

Bosses said the move follows council budget cut-backs which will also reduce the number of services offered at its three sites.

Walsall Council leader Sean Coughlan said no decision has yet being made, and he is due to visit the partnership on Monday, to discuss the situation. The centres attract 4,000 people per month to youth and holiday clubs, outreach projects, a daily luncheon club, sports and education classes.

This year the organisation received £165,785 from the council including £135,000 for youth projects run from the Electric Palace, in Elmore Row, and at Blakenall Community Centre, in Blakenall Row.

A further £30,785 covers community development and events including at the Stan Ball Centre, in Abbotts Street. Bloxwich Commu-

by Deborah Hardiman

nity Partnership chief executive Eleanor Boycott said: "We are a charity, but we get this funding from the council to undertake the work. This means a great deal of what we do will be affected by the cuts, in particular our youth activities. We feel that any reduction in funding will have a knock-on effect on other organisations in this area."

But Councillor Coughlan said: "We are fully aware of the impact that trying to fund £29 million worth of savings. This has been forced on us by the Government cuts, but we have got to do what we think is best right across Walsall."

The council said it needs to make £29 million worth of savings next year.



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Thursday 11 December
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Wednesday	17 December	09.00am - 5.30pm
Thursday	18 December	09.00am - 7.00pm
Friday	19 December	09.00am - 5.30pm
Saturday	20 December	09.00am - 5.30pm
Sunday	21 December	10.30am - 4.30pm
Monday	22 December	09.00am - 7.00pm
Tuesday	23 December	09.00am - 7.00pm
Wednesday	CHRISTMAS EVE	09.00am - 5.00pm
Thursday	CHRISTMAS DAY	CENTRE CLOSED
Friday	BOXING DAY	11.00am - 5.00pm
Saturday	27 December	09.00am - 5.30pm
Sunday	28 December	10.30am - 4.30pm
Monday	29 December	09.00am - 5.30pm
Tuesday	30 December	09.00am - 5.30pm
Wednesday	NEW YEARS EVE	09.00am - 5.00pm
Thursday	NEW YEARS DAY	CENTRE CLOSED
Friday	2 January 2015	Normal trading resumes

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The car park will be open half an hour after the above closing times. Individual shop hours may vary slightly.

Look out for Free Radio on site on the 13th December from 11.00am - 3.00pm

Story Corner with Cat James and a Special Appearance from Humfree the Hamster
Santa and his sleigh also on site on specific dates in December - see website for further details

EATING OUT

Mirchi is currying platefuls of favour



Continuing success - Mirchi staff, from left, Aboul Motin, chef Nazir Hoque and Maz Hoque

SINCE opening two years ago, a Bloxwich restaurant has proved to have a great deal going for it.

But don't just take my word for it. Mirchi was launched principally to serve the residents of the Turnberry estate, but has seen its reputation and clientele grow in that time.

One such regular is Frank Dutton of Short Heath, who has been dining at Mirchi since it opened - and ventures back once or twice a week.

"My wife and daughter are both vegetarians and there's nowhere better to meet their needs," he said.

The restaurant has been one of the leaders on Trip Advisor for welcome feedback, again prompting more previously unsuspecting diners to see for themselves.

There are even plans for Mirchi to launch its own TV channel.

Personal

On our visit, even at an early hour, there was a close-to-full restaurant, with many more turning up as the evening went on.

Manager Maz Hoque prides himself on the personal touch and over time has got to know many of his customers.

He is never rushed, even at particularly busy times, dealing patiently and unassumingly with diners and their requests.

He is clearly aware that good service and food go hand in hand and relies on positive feedback to spread the word, leading to many new diners sampling its delights.

The approach is more than paying off. It is easy to see why it's proved a popular attraction as aside from the ease in getting there, dining is such a delight.

Because of its success, Maz has had to take on extra staff, while the menu is regularly freshened up.

The fare includes many offerings I have never come across before, so there's always something new to try. President's Grill anyone? Minty Beef? Chingri Chumun?

Mushroom

It need not be a step into the unknown, as diners soon become familiar with Maz, his pleasant staff and the quality of food.

Following the obligatory poppadums, my other half opted for a mushroom bhaji to begin, served with a delicious mild curry. Butter chicken followed, while there were many items that took my fancy.

I plumped for a combination of Tandoori chicken paneer palak, a spinach dish cooked in a medium sauce and cheese and zamiree masala, sweet and creamy with tangerine.

The latter edged it for its creamy taste and texture, but it's well worth a return visit just to try some of the other mysterious, yet tasty sounding options.

Not forgetting the friendliness of Maz and his staff.

Mirchi is unlicensed so diners can take their own alcohol. After washing my main down with bottle of beer, there was still room for dessert, and the toffee crunch pie was just as indicated.

Mirchi is open from 5.30pm Thursday to Sunday and from 5pm on Fridays and Saturdays.

To book, or for details of special offers, call 01922 401199 or visit www.mirchibloxwich.co.uk

Mark Shipp

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PANDORA
UNFORGETTABLE MOMENTS

Health centre bid is backed by MP

PLANS to keep a Black Country health centre in the heart of the town has been backed by an MP.

The Walsall Walk-in centre needs to relocate from its current location in Digbeth as part of regeneration in the borough.

Following a public consultation, a majority of people called for it to remain in Walsall town centre and the Clinical Commissioning Group will now look for an alternative site. Other choices were to merge with a centre at Walsall Manor or be relocated to the north of the borough.

Walsall North MP David Winnick has welcomed the outcome of the consultation.

He said: "The walk-in centre has been highly successful, no appointments are needed, and the amount of wait time is kept to a minimum."

Church gets all set for festivities

A FESTIVE concert and a messy service are among the social activities at a Willenhall church.

Short Heath Singers will hold a Christmas concert at the Methodist Church, in Wesley Road, Short Heath, on Saturday at 7.30pm. The carols will feature a variety of music styles.

Admission is £5 on the door. Proceeds will go towards building development work.

On December 21 there will be a messy church for families at 3.30pm followed by a carol service at 6.15pm. The Christmas Day service will start at 10.15am.

Apartments and homes to be built at historic house

THE RED House in Great Barr will be transformed into new homes under plans unveiled. The historic mansion house in Red House Park has long been a target for thieves and vandals.

Originally built in 1841 for Walsall MP Robert Scott, it has been derelict for 10 years. However, GR8 Space Ltd has unveiled plans to convert the building into eight two-bedroom apartments, while keeping the home's historical features. The Worcester-based firm also wants to build a terrace of six three-bedroom houses at the site.

Computer skills boost

TEACHERS have completed the first phase of a computer programming course aimed at giving them skills to meet Government demands.

Walsall College helped launch the course through 'asfi,' accredited skills for industry, which they set up to support the accreditation of in-company training. Under the Government changes, pupils as young as five will be taught how to write code, debug simple programmes and tackle computer issues.

The certificate in Computing for Teachers is delivered by the tutors with industry experience and divided into four units which cover a number of modules including programming, computer systems and database theory. Carl Jordan, director of asfi, said: "It is now mandatory for teachers to be able to teach computer science to students aged five to 14. The feedback we are receiving from schools is that the many short courses available are not giving teachers the confidence and ability to teach such a complex new curriculum."

"Our one year course covers the subject in detail and is already proving more beneficial in helping teachers and schools address the latest changes to the curriculum."

The Red House has been at the centre of a long-running dispute concerning its future after repeatedly being targeted by vandals. Five years ago, it was estimated it would cost £1.7 million to bring the building back into use for the community and developers have been eyeing it up for housing ever since.

Great Barr councillor Sadie Smith said: "We have had several attempts over the years to bring the building back into use, but it has been difficult for all sorts of reasons, including costs and not being taken seriously enough."

"We are now in a situation where residential is the only use being put forward for it. I'm concerned what impact this could have on the park access."

The new plan by GR8 Space has now been submitted to Sandwell Council for approval. The document reads: "These alterations have been considered carefully and kept to a minimum to achieve satisfactory layouts."

"The main historical features, both internally and externally will be retained unaltered."

Areas to remain unchanged include the roof, main entrance, staircases and halls and landings. The terraced houses would be close to the house, fronting on to Hill Lane, each with a small garden area.

The Red House is owned by Sandwell Council and stands on a 27-acre estate.

It has been empty since 2004. While derelict, it has repeatedly been vandalised and had lead stolen from its roof.



The mansion house, formerly the home of Walsall MP Robert Scott, set for development

Reprieve for home as it will stay open

A RESPITE care home in Darlaston that had an uncertain future is set to remain open.

The future of Fallings Heath House, which provides eight beds for people with multiple disabilities, was reviewed by Walsall Council earlier this year as part of its bid to save millions of pounds on services.

Options included outsourcing it to a third party and residents given personal budgets to pay for services themselves. However, things are now set to stay as they are at the Walsall Road site following discussions with staff, users and carers.

A report to the council's decision-making cabinet later this month will recommend with carrying on with the current service.

Councillor Diane Coughlan, portfolio holder for social care, said: "We have spent the last few months listening to the feedback we've had from service users, carers, families and staff and we know they felt it was already a done deal."

"We assured carers and staff we were meeting them to listen to their views and we have. This is illustrated in the fact that we will be asking cabinet to consider a recommendation to keep Fallings Heath open."

"The consultation has been really useful as it's given us all an opportunity to look at what works well, what could be improved and how best to provide this."

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Daisy bearing up after teddy's M6 adventure

DAISY Jewkes was left devastated when her teddy bear flew out of the car window as her family travelled along the M6.

But diligent workmen retrieved the treasured toy from the central reservation – and reunited the delighted four-year-old with her precious 'old teddy'.

Little Daisy thought the brown bear was gone forever after dropping it from the back seat window of her parents' car while travelling through road works on the M6 near Cannock.

She cried out as she lost her grip of the bear, before her mother Nicola agonisingly watched it fall onto the central reservation of the highway, as the family drove back home to Brierley Hill after a family visit to Scotland.

Return

Not giving up hope, Mrs Jewkes, aged 36, emailed the Highways Agency to look out for the bear. Just a week later, the firm responded to say they had found the bear and wanted to return it.

The Withmoor Pre School pupil was reunited with the teddy, and its attached blanket, on her fourth birthday at highway firm Carillion's offices in Cannock.

Mrs Jewkes, a legal secretary, said: "I couldn't believe it, and neither could Daisy. She was completely overwhelmed, her face light up when she got the bear back in the hands."

"She was crying her eyes out after she lost it, and despite her having other bears, it was 'old teddy' she wanted."

She added: "After seeing the bear on the central reservation, we knew we couldn't turn around and pick it up, so on the off-chance I contacted the Highways Agency in the hope that workmen might see it."



Daisy Jewkes with Carillion traffic safety control officer Paul Rowton and her teddy

"I got a response a couple of days later saying they really wanted to help, then a week later they said they hadn't found it."

"But an hour and a half later we got another email saying the teddy had been found - a little bit dirty, but all in one piece."

David Smith, a manager at Carillion, washed the teddy bear before arranging for Daisy to collect it a few weeks ago.

The girl wrote a letter of thanks to the company.

Mr Smith said: "I got the email and asked the guys to look out with it, within days we found it in the central reservation. It was dirty, but after a wash it was perfect again."

"The look on the girl's face was absolutely fantastic when she got it back. We were delighted to help."

Also in the car on the day the teddy was lost was Daisy's father Nick, aged 46, and brothers William, eight, and Ben, six.

£10,000 locked in for memorial



From left, Willenhall Heritage Trust members Ralph Jackson and Wendy Evans, with Councillor Diane Coughlan

PLANS for a monument engraved with the names of locksmiths past and present to commemorate Willenhall's heritage has attracted £10,000 funding.

The town's councillors and Willenhall Heritage Trust launched a sponsorship campaign earlier this year to install the brick monument on land at the corner of Walsall Road and Rose Hill. The idea was for a permanent reminder of the town's proud history, boasting world famous names including Yale, Chubb, and Squire. It is based on a similar project in Hednesford, Staffordshire, that recognises thou-

sands of miners. Walsall Council put up the initial funding for the scheme.

Members of the public are being invited to sponsor each brick in return for the names of lock workers engraved on them. Councillor Diane Coughlan, of Willenhall South, said it was important to remember those who made Willenhall a leading light in the industry.

Anyone interested in sponsoring one of the Willenhall bricks can email membersofwht@btinternet.com or write to WHT c/o 69 Brereton Road Willenhall WV12 5LA.

Huge parking bid backlash

WALSALL Council has revealed that the public reaction against bringing in charges at free car parks in the borough was the among strongest it's ever had.

Chiefs have made a U-turn on plans to charge from April in Aldridge, Bloxwich, Brownhills, Darlaston and Willenhall. It had been hoped to rake in

£100,000 next year. The announcement came after the town hall revealed it needs to make £29 million in savings next year and £86m over four years.

The change of heart comes after thousands of residents took part in a consultation exercise.

Walsall Council leader Sean Coughlan: "The reaction to this consultation has been the best we have ever had."

"What the consultation has shown is that people are frightened by the impact of these on those services,

their homes and their communities." Campaign group Willenhall Ay We collected a 2,050-name petition against the move. Lib Dem leader Ian Shires said: "It doesn't surprise me in the least that this decision has been taken. The same thing happened in Wolverhampton when the ruling Labour group there announced a lot of cuts and then the 'caped crusader' came and there was a change of heart."

The authority is spending almost £20,000 asking for residents' views.



Enjoy a drink at the outdoor tables before you dine



Baked Cornish Brie and Onion Marmalade Brûlée



Giant eclair – one of the many desserts at The Mermaid in Compton



The warm, welcoming spacious dining area

Steaks are high but this quality pub really does fit the bill well

WHEN your girlfriend doesn't live in the same city, or even country as you, face-time can be extra important.

The long phonecalls, constant text messages and occasional Skypes (I hate Skype) go some way to appeasing the loss of real interaction.

But nothing can beat the real thing. That's why, as much as we love lazy film nights with a takeaway, a good meal out when you do have time together is very important.

It's nice to really splash out sometimes and go somewhere fancy: posh nosh, perhaps. But when you've had a long week at work you want to be somewhere where you can relax. A warm, friendly pub usually fits the bill.

I want to talk football, holidays, movies and music. I want to see what she's been up to for the past two weeks since I saw her last. I want to know how her work is and tell her about my own highs and lows.

FOOD FOCUS

By Leigh Sanders

So we chose The Mermaid. It's a pub near Wightwick Manor on the road between Wolverhampton and Bridgnorth. We'd passed it recently on our first venture out towards the historic town since I moved to the Black Country.

Relaxed

It immediately grabbed our attention and we added it to the must-visit list. So off we went. It has quite a few tables outside and despite being near to a main road it was pretty peaceful.

It was a busy Saturday evening. The car park, and pub, were packed. But this didn't affect the level of service. As soon as we arrived, a beaming waiter was with us ready to find us a table.

We were taken right into the far corner of the low-beamed, olde world pub. It's like a

museum has been raided and a selection of fireplaces shoehorned in so each section has a dark, warm feel.

A variety of off-kilter decorations adorn the walls. In our little hideaway, tucked in the far corner away from the hustle and bustle, there was an array of mirrors on the wall. Although the drinks took a little longer arrive, due to the number of people at the bar, we had no complaints on the rest of service from the polite waitress.

Casting an eye over the menu, it was the usual pub grub with some interesting extras thrown in. I opted for the tear-apart cheesy garlic bread. A grainy bread made for something different, while the melted cheese on top was soft and gooey.

My partner opted for the baked brie on a seeded wholemeal roll with onion marmalade and butter. She certainly seemed pleased. Next came the mains. I was tempted by the wild boar and chorizo burger, but instead opted for the hunter's chicken with chips, onion rings and breaded mushrooms. The meat was juicy and the tangy bar-

becue sauce oozed flavour. The girlfriend plumped for a rump steak with peppercorn sauce, chips and onion rings. The sauce was a particular highlight.

Despite some happy tummies, we thought we'd try the desserts too. There's a great choice. Eventually, I opted for the giant éclair. It was almost the size of a small baguette, filled with white chocolate mousse and covered in chocolate sauce.

Ultimate

My other half had the ultimate brownie tower – a selection of brownies on a biscuit base served with ice cream. The real surprise was the toffee sauce oozing out of the middle.

The trip had been a resounding success. Not only had we discovered a new haunt to bring friends, we'd enjoyed well-cooked meals served by happy, friendly staff.

We'd gotten some of that all-important face time although tomorrow was Sunday and she'd be returning home to Wales, we left with smiles on our faces.

Hundreds take on fun events to raise vital funds for charities



Striking a pose for the Mary Stevens Hospice Santa jog, Stourbridge



Two young girls complete with red nose at the Stourbridge event



A competitor warms up for the Mary Stevens Hospice Santa jog

Tis the season for Santas to get running boots on



Limbering up for the Acorns Hospice fun run



Heading for Acorns Santa Run at Walsall Arboretum



Natalie Farouz and Betty the dog at the arboretum

HUNDREDS of people braved the elements to enjoy some festive fun and raise money for a host of good causes.

Crowds of people donned their Father Christmas costumes to take part in annual Santa Runs in Walsall, Tettenhall and Stourbridge over the weekend. On Saturday, the festive run took place at Tettenhall College, then on Sunday there were runs held at Walsall Arboretum and Mary Stevens Park in Stourbridge. At Tettenhall, pupils, as well as family and friends, took part in the mile long run around the school grounds to raise money for Compton Hospice's Journey Appeal for bereaved families.

Deb Liddle, librarian and charity organiser at the school, said: "It started off just a way for pupils to get



Youngsters are seen getting into the seasonal spirit at Tettenhall College Santa Dash



A crowd of people dress as Father Christmas to raise money for Acorns Children's Hospice

By Charlie Benton

involved with charity work and it has been going on for three years, getting bigger each year. "We have done some fundraising but we specifically wanted to do the Santa Run for the hospice because not many people know about it, especially the Journey Appeal, which does great work for bereaved families. The event was also attended by Vicki Wootton and Simon Cater from the Compton Hospice. Miss Wootton said: "We found out about a month ago that the school had chosen to do it for Compton Hospice. "The service helps so many families through bereavement so any money raised is fantastic." Mr Cater said: "The Santa Run has always been very successful and for Tettenhall College to support the hos-

pice is absolutely fantastic. We need to raise over £6 million a year just to keep the doors open, most of which is donated by the local community. "Events like this are great because it all adds up and goes towards the final pot. We are so appreciative." Councillor Andrew Wynne, who joined in with the race with his children, said: "I think it is a wonderful cause.

Gathered

"It will raise lots of money for the charity and the turnout was absolutely fantastic. It is particularly good fun for the kids, too." At Walsall, more than 250 people, young and old, gathered for the run, which raised cash for Acorns. The charity, which has a hospice in Walstead Road, Walsall, hopes to raise around £35,000 from the event. Shujee Khatun, major events officer at Acorns, said: "It



Two Father Christmases running and a-leaping



Now you see us - Santas appear from behind the trees



Four festive fundraisers at Tettenhall College

was a fantastic spectacle to see so many Santas in one place and wonderful to see so many friends and families having a brilliant time while raising money. "A big thank you to everyone who took part - the atmosphere was magical and it feels like Christmas has well and truly arrived. Shujee added: "Acorns relies on fundraising and donations for the majority of its income so events like the Santa Run have a real impact. It's not only a great way of having fun but it also helps us carry on our work." The event was supported by Western Power Distribution which means all monies raised will go directly towards funding the £8 million plus a year it costs to run the three Acorns hospices. Hundreds of people also turned out for the 5km run in Stourbridge, which raised money for Mary Stevens Hospice.

From Striking Santa and Angels who read all about it – the modern take on the festive story

FROM a disillusioned Father Christmas to a James Bond parody of saving a kidnapped Saint Nicholas and the birth of Jesus told from the perspective of a sheep – the traditional school nativity has evolved as the years have gone by.

And at least one Black Country school has dispensed with it altogether, although stressed it was still keeping the spirit of Christmas alive.

The only school that responded to an Express & Star survey and said it was not doing a nativity play was Ocker Hill Academy in Tipton.

The junior school's principal Adam Hollyhead said: "We don't do a play. The last few years we have hosted a Christmas carol concert at our local church, St Marks."

"We help raise funds for the church at the same time. We like to think we are keeping the true spirit of Christmas alive."

Some have brought in plays such as Santa's On Strike, by Andrew Oxspring. The play features a disheartened Father Christmas who thinks children no longer deserve presents. But then he gets shown pictures of family life to persuade him Christmas is still a time of giving. Schools that

By Dan Wainwright

are doing Santa's On Strike, including Brierley Hill Primary School and Cannock's Bridgton Primary School, are also having traditional nativities. Some schools leave the nativity to one year group and have others perform songs and plays that look at different aspects of Christmas.

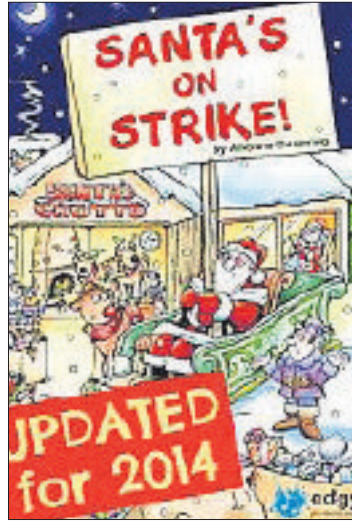
But in the vast majority of responses, the story of Jesus in the manger, the three wise men, shepherds watching flocks and a star above Bethlehem was there in some form.

The nativity also takes centre stage in schools in Dudley, although there are other plays performed as part of the concert.

Lee-Anne Knowles, assistant headteacher at Brierley Hill Primary School said: "We are performing three plays this Christmas. Nursery and reception are putting on 'Our First Nativity'."

Years one and two are doing one about Santa going on strike which is more modern. Years three to six are also doing a more modern one called 'Christmas is Forever' which is a parody of James Bond where Santa is stolen and they have to get him back."

Queen Victoria School in Sedgley did a modern nativity called Angel Express and a version of A Christmas Carol.



Santa's on Strike has an 'optional' nativity scene



Hey Ewe tells the story from a sheep's perspective



Angel Express is a modern nativity for infants

True meaning of Christmas still alive and well, despite claims made in survey

Traditional nativity play remains stable in schools

By Dan Wainwright

IS there really no room at the inn for a traditional nativity? That's the conclusion of users of a parenting website who believe just a third of schools still put on a Christmas play focussing on the birth of Jesus.

Political correctness in a multicultural society has been blamed. But an investigation by The Chronicle's sister publication The Express & Star found that, in the West Midlands at least, the true meaning of Christmas is alive and well in schools.

Dozens of primary schools in Wolverhampton, Dudley, Walsall, Sandwell and Staffordshire were contacted asking for details of their Christmas concerts.

And all but one that replied includes a traditional nativity as part of it – albeit some with a more modern take featuring a striking and disillusioned Father Christmas, angels learning of the birth of Christ from a newspaper and stories told from the perspective of a sheep.

Spaceman

According to Netmums, just a third of UK schools now put on the traditional nativity play.

The survey found, aliens, recycling bins, a Lord Sugar-style 'Lord Christmas', Elvis, footballers, a lobster, a napkin, carrots, sprouts, a pumpkin and a spaceman instead.

Around 47 per cent offer an 'updated nativity' and one in eight have dropped the Christmas references.

That is not the case in the Black Country and Staffordshire, although some schools tell different versions of the nativity, including one or two that do it from the perspective of the angels or even from the perspective of the sheep. Hey Ewe is one such play, being put on by Cannock's Chads Moor Community Infants and Nursery school.

According to the website Out Of The Ark, where the plays are sold, it is 'a straightforward but original nativity play told from the perspective of a curious sheep'.

Duncan Cocker, headteacher at Villiers Primary School in Bilston, was surprised by



Children at Villiers Primary, Bilston, in their nativity play. Head Duncan Cocker said he was surprised by the Netmums polls results

the survey results. He said: "I did wonder when I saw the figure about one third doing the nativity whether that meant it was only a nativity they put on with nothing else."

"Our reception Christmas production is entitled The Bossy Fairy. The story highlights the true spirit of Christmas and also works in the retelling of the nativity through our children's marvellous acting, singing and dancing skills. All 80 children were involved in this wonderful performance."

The nativity was very much the focus at SS Mary and John's Catholic Primary Academy in Wolverhampton. Principal Joanne Hanslip said: "We will be performing two nativity plays; one which is a modern nativity play

script telling the traditional nativity story; and our second which is the traditional nativity story accompanied by traditional and modern carols and interspersed with readings from the Bible."

Bilston's Wilkinson Primary School is involving all 427 children in performances in the new school hall, built following a devastating fire in 2011. Two groups of children will perform nativity stories while the older children are putting on Cinderella, family liaison officer Carol Duffield revealed.

Claregate Primary School is also doing nativity plays and carols. Headteacher Mick Murphy said: "The children at Claregate are performing Christmas songs for parents of

nursery children, an early years nativity, a Key Stage One nativity and the school choir perform a Christmas carol concert."

"We also have a visit from Santa and the parents and teachers association pay for a Christmas pantomime for years one to six and entertainment for nursery and reception children."

St Luke's Primary School in Blakenhall is doing a performance called Prickly Hay which is a musical based on the nativity. Children in years three to six are participating in an evening Christmas Concert where the children sing traditional carols and Christmas songs, read poems and readings from the bible which are all based on the na-

tivity. Russells Hall Primary School is doing traditional nativities.

And Anne Elledge from Emmanuel School, Walsall, said children had plenty of tradition in their plays too.

She said: "We are staging a Christmas play, involving all classes. It is based around the Russian traditional tale of Baboushka, who hosted the wise men on their journey to Bethlehem."

"They invited her to travel with them, but she had too much to do to clean her house, so said she would catch them up later. But she was too late, so still searches for the Christ-child, and when she sees a baby, leaves a toy, just in case."

"As part of the production we will do a traditional stable scene, there will be a snowflake dance, Russian folk dance, cleaning 'stomp,' and of course some songs."

"Quite separate from the play, we also take Christmas out into the community. The key stage two classes sing carols at Walsall Centre for the Blind, key stage one do a little performance for the Afro-Caribbean Community Association lunch club for elderly people, and the choir sing carols at a care home."

Topics

Netherton Primary School staged two traditional nativities – one in school and one at a church. But headteacher Andrew Rushton said there was another aspect to this year's Christmas concert. He said: "We are also holding a First World War concert, following this term's topics which have all been based on the Great War."

St James Primary School in Oldbury is putting on A Wriggly Nativity, which is designed for children to be able to move about while singing instead of sitting still.

Sacred Heart Primary in Tipton is putting on a nativity but also doing Aladdin as a Christmas pantomime.

None of the schools who responded to the E&S said they were removing the Christian references. But Netmums said its survey of 2,000 parents across the country had found cases where school Christmas plays incorporated references to the Muslim festival Eid, the Jewish Hanukkah or Hindu Diwali.

Siobhan Freegard co-founder of Netmums, said: "Do they know it's Christmas? At some schools, it seems not."

"While the UK is a diverse and multicultural society and it's right children learn about all religions and cultures, many parents feel the traditional nativity is being pushed aside."

Duty calls for all armchair marines

GAMES

By Leon Burakowski

THE blockbuster Call of Duty franchise has been given a turbo-boost by the arrival of its latest incarnation, Call of Duty: Advanced Warfare (18).

This takes the all-conquering first person shooter video game 40 years into the future, the globe-trotting adventure beginning with a scenario of a North Korean invasion of its southern neighbour, with you among the US marines called in to even up the odds.

Where this scores over last year's slightly disappointing CoD: Ghosts is the amazing array of future weaponry, such as huge walking tanks and swarms of killer drones. This includes the ultimate accessory, an exo-skeleton giving your average grunt super-human strength and speed.

Developers Sledgehammer have learned from other newly popular arrivals, such as Titanfall, whilst the publisher Activision has the big bucks to attract A-list talent Kevin Spacey to add his voice and image to the project, as the world's most powerful private military contractor.

Call of Duty: Advanced Warfare has superb visuals and wisely blends the traditional first person shooter elements that made the game popular in the first place with enough futuristic bells and whistles to keep franchise fatigue at bay. Reviewed on X360 and available on all major platforms.

Based on Nickelodeon's sequel to **Avatar: The Last Airbender**, **The Legend Of Korra (12+)** is Activision's stylish beat-'em-up game featuring a feisty two-fisted heroine and her polar bear/dog Naga. The game, as reviewed on PS3, is good looking in the anime style thanks to Bayonetta mak-



Futuristic firefight — a scene from Call of Duty: Advanced Warfare

ers Japan's Platinum Games and true to the TV show. The repetitive waves of enemies can get tedious but there is usually a new challenge around the corner to keep the player engaged as you utilise Korra's control of the elements to progress. It's also available for PC, PS4, Xbox One and X360

Let's get ready to Rumble... the wildly imaginative **Digimon All-Star Rumble (7)** sees the Digimon monsters pitted against each other in a series of gladiatorial bouts, available in different modes, with 12 of the creatures to choose from. The action is fast and furious, bizarre and colourful in the latest addition to Bandai Namco's Digimon universe. The game is available for PlayStation 3 and X360.

For Nintendo 3DS, **Tenkaï Knights: Brave Battle (7)**, also from Bandai Namco, is another game based on an animated TV series/toy tie-in with robotic hi-tech machines facing off against each other. But it is just too generic, too run-of-the-mill to please any but the most undemanding fans of the TV show, and doesn't really make the most of the 3D facility.

Adventure Time is without doubt

the funniest and most surreal work of animated TV genius since SpongeBob SquarePants. In fact, the story of Finn the Human and Jake his shape-shifting dog and their adventures in the Land of Ooo is possibly the oddest TV show ever and I warmly recommend a journey into the world of children's TV to check it out. I wish I could say the same for it's latest game spin-off **Adventure Time: The Secret of the Nameless Kingdom (7)**, available for X360, PS3, PC and here reviewed on 3DS. It's a slightly retro top-down view puzzle solver but never quite employs enough of the TV show's hip humour to overcome a fundamentally dull game. Also from Little Orbit comes **Penguins of Madagascar The Video Game (3)**, a tie-in with the new movie, which is available for 3DS, Wii and Wii U and is aimed at younger gamers. Swap between the penguins and solve puzzles in the pursuit of their much-loved cheese puffs. It's not too demanding but the familiar Penguin humour adds to the enjoyment.

Taking a long and winding road to an idyllic holiday

TRAVEL

CORNWALL – such a long way but always worth it.

For me, when the weather is good, as it was for my family's visit, there is no better place to holiday.

After spending so long on the road, it is good to relax and get away from it all, and that is exactly what we were able to do at Trevella Holiday Park.

The award-winning Five-Star caravan and campsite is in Cran- tock, just three miles away from Newquay.

Major attractions like the famous Fistrall beach, Minack Theatre, Lost Gardens of Heligan and the Eden Project are a short drive away, not forgetting the coastal resorts of St Ives, Padstow and Falmouth. We even took in Land's End.

Picnic

But when not travelling around to see the sights and sounds of the beautiful county, Trevella itself has such a lot to offer, creating that perfect family destination.

Our superior caravan, with decking to allow occupants to sit around and socialise, could accommodate up to eight people. It overlooked the popular playground, which also allowed for a kickaround or picnic.

There is a heated outdoor pool, a games room, with pool table and arcade machines and a crazy golf course. Visitors are also well-served for provisions with an on-site shop and cafe and two well-stocked fishing pools.

Trevella is in a secluded spot, which for me adds to its attraction as one can avoid the hustle and bustle of major holiday camps. Yet, there is so much to see and do on the



The playground and green are features of the idyllic Trevella Park, Cornwall



The Safari tents have been set up for that extra adventure at the site

doorstep. Crantock beach is just a short walk away. And whatever one's preferred accommodation, Trevella has it covered, with two lodges also available for extra luxury.

Trevella has for 16 years in a row won a David Bellamy Gold Award and claimed a bronze award in Cornwall Tourism's Holiday Park of the Year awards 2014. General manager Kieran Lynch, said the park's setting and its 'Simple Pleasures' maxim were the main reasons behind its success.

Trevella welcomes touring cara-

vans, motorhomes and campers. Pets are also welcome. Holidays at Trevella Park start from just £561 in June for seven nights staying in a Luxury-grade static caravan with three bedrooms. Caravan and camping pitches start from only £18.80 per pitch per night.

In keeping with its aim to make a holidays a simple pleasure, the park has introduced safari tents and a guide to 50 Great Adventures. Find out more at www.trevella.co.uk or call 01637 830 308 to check availability.

Mark Shipp



A chance to recharge the batteries at the spa in Leicestershire



Attractive areas to sit and walk around



Beautiful views from the 25-metre pool



Enjoy the Three Rs at Champneys Spring

Pop open the Champneys and enjoy the feeling of total bliss

THE three 'Rs'. Rest, relaxation and recuperation. That's what Champneys is all about. A countryside escape to recharge the batteries with 'me time'.

This was my first visit to Champneys Springs in Leicestershire. I've been to day spas before but it never really feels all that relaxing because of time restrictions.

Enticing

So the chance of an overnight stay was particularly enticing. It was a good opportunity for some mother and daughter bonding time. The approach to the spa is down a very long driveway. How grand!

We found the spacious and luxurious reception area at the end of a pretty walkway over a pond complete with fountains and plenty of vibrant flowers. A beautiful entrance to start your stay along with cheerful, helpful and polite staff. After a brief tour of the facilities, dinner booked in and

TRAVEL FOCUS

By Lisa Williams

essential information given, we were ready to go.

There is loads on offer. Gym, workout classes, pool, steam room, sauna, spa treatments, bikes to ride around the grounds or just lounging around.

We wanted to start off with some energetic exercise so ventured to the well-equipped gym. After our brief session it was time to find our room and get ready to relax and enjoy a bit of pampering. It felt peculiar at first, wandering around in a regulation robe and flip flops in the company of strangers. But it's what you do, so we did, and it's amazing how quickly it feels perfectly normal.

We ambled about taking in the different areas.

There are plenty of rooms and areas full of chairs, sofas, chaise longue for you to chill out. There's even a little snug with a

chess board, blankets and internet access if you really can't face being completely cut off from the world. We had no time for that though as our pre-booked thalassotherapy pool session beckoned. It's something neither of us had ever heard of but were intrigued to find out more.

The giant Jacuzzi-type pool is filled with mineral-enriched waters meant to aid well-being. Wading in was lovely – it was really warm and inviting.

Wellbeing

There are different areas within the huge pool all with hydrotherapy jets that stimulate and tone tired, aching muscles. Great for us as we both do a lot of running.

It's also good for treating cellulite, arthritis and muscular or joint aches and pains. It was heavenly. Be prepared; it's not gentle, there are no soft bubbles like a Jacuzzi but more intense jets.

We both left the pool with little red blotches on our bodies but feeling great and de-stressed. Keeping with the watery theme it was time to try out the beautiful pool next

door. All this doing very little is tiring so it was great having a room as a base. Our haven was simply decorated with two comfy and sumptuous armchairs.

We could shower, watch a bit of TV, read magazines and chatter away while we decided how we would relax next.

For me it was the bamboo massage. I had visions of large canes being inflicted on me. Treat or torture? Turns out it was a bit of both. It's not for the faint-hearted. There's no gentle, tickly massage.

The therapist oiled up some thick bamboo canes rolling them over my legs, arms and back to stretch and massage my body. The pressure was quite intense but I quite liked it and came out feeling relaxed with silky smooth skin.

Ravenous from all our activities dinner was a welcome prospect. The menu is carefully put together and indicates, fibre, fat, wheat-free, dairy-free, vegetarian, options.

The rooms all have DVD players so a film and bed was the perfect end to our day.

For more details visit www.champneys.com/spa-resorts/champneys-spring

CHOICE



Simon Cowell

The X Factor (ITV, 8.30pm)
This is it then – the first stage of the 2014 sing-off when we see who has the right stuff to walk away with the prize money. Not that winning the show matters that much of course; even getting through to this stage of the game can be such a massive boost to any aspiring TV presenter or reality star looking for a spot in the Big Brother house; next year's I'm A Celebrity... or even, dare we say it, a pop career of their own. As the judges repeatedly reminded us the other week, "Literally anything can happen". So, as the remaining acts battle it out in part one of the final, settle back and enjoy as the lucky few attempt to hold their nerve and sing for their lives. Your host is Dermot O'Leary, while Simon Cowell, Cheryl, Mel B and Louis Walsh will be passing judgement.

BBC1

6.00 Breakfast. 10.00 Saturday Kitchen Live. 11.30 James Martin: Home Comforts. 12.00 BBC News: Weather. 12.10 Football Focus. 12.50 Saturday Sportsday. 1.00 Gymnastics World Cup. 3.00 Cycling: Track World Cup. 4.30 Final Score. 5.10 A Question of Sport. (R) 5.40 BBC News: Regional News. Weather. **6.00 Pointless Celebrities.** Alexander Armstrong quizzes eight chart-topping singers – Paul Young and Carol Decker, Sheila Ferguson and Dana, Paul Heaton and Jacqui Abbott and Keith Duffy and Mikey Graham. **6.50 Strictly Come Dancing.** Tess Daly and Claudia Winkleman present the semi-final of the ballroom battle, in which the remaining five couples will be hoping to pull off their best performances yet as they tackle two dances each. Judges Len Goodman, Bruno Tonioli, Craig Revel Horwood and Darcey Bussell give their verdicts on the routines, but the all-important votes from the viewers decide who will waltz into next week's final and compete for the glitterball trophy. The results are tomorrow at 7.20pm. **8.25 Atlantis.** As the gang is chased round an ancient burial ground by an army of undead flesh-eaters, and Jason battles for his life within the caves. **9.10 Casually.** A ceiling collapse at the cathedral leaves several of the congregation trapped. Loffy helps a patient who thinks he is Jesus and Zoe catches Max spying on her and Dylan. **10.00 The National Lottery Live.** Jenni Falconer is joined by supergroup McBusted as she reveals the numbers for the Lotto and Thunderball draws. **10.10 BBC News: Weather.** **10.30 Match of the Day.** Dan Walker presents highlights of the latest Premier League clashes, including Chelsea v Hull City at Stamford Bridge and Arsenal v Newcastle United at the Emirates Stadium; National Lottery Update. **11.55 The Football League Show.** Manish Bhasin presents highlights and all the goals from the latest fixtures in the Championship, League One and League Two. **1.15 Film: Black Eagle.** (1988) 2.50 Weather for the Week Ahead. 2.55 BBC News.

BBC2

6.00 CBBC. 11.00 The Blue Planet. (R) 12.00 James Martin's Food Map of Britain. (R) 12.20 Rick Stein's Far Eastern Odyssey. (R) 1.20 The Rockford Files. (R) 2.05 Film: Funny Girl. (1968) Musical biopic of Fanny Brice, starring Barbra Streisand. 4.30 Andrew Marr's The Making of Modern Britain. (R) 5.30 Restoring England's Heritage. **6.00 Secrets of the Castle with Ruth, Peter and Tom.** Ruth Goodman, Peter Ginn and Tom Pinfold examine the ways in which every aspect of the construction of a castle required the stonemasons, blacksmiths and carpenters to co-ordinate their efforts – from making and sharpening tools, to processing wood, and securing timber scaffolding on the castle walls. Peter and Tom help fix the Guedelon water mill, which is having major teething problems, and the team follows the progress of the construction of a wooden walkway connecting the chapel tower with the Great Hall. (R) **7.00 Flog It!** Adam Partridge and Catherine Southon value items brought into the town hall in Todmorden, West Yorkshire, while Paul Martin visits the Brontë Parsonage Museum in Haworth. **8.00 Perry and Croft: Made in Britain.** The concluding episode of the celebration of writing duo David Croft and Jimmy Perry, examines how the duo's comedies each encapsulated the end of an era. Last in the series. **8.30 Dad's Army.** Jonesy's van runs out of petrol and the platoon is forced to spend the night in a spooky deserted house, where the men's imaginations soon run wild. (R) **9.00 QI XL.** Extended edition. Sara Pascoe, Jack Whitehall, Adam Hills and Alan Davies attempt to answer host Stephen Fry's range of fiendish questions. **9.45 Tomorrow's Worlds: The Unearthly History of Science Fiction.** Dominic Sandbrook examines the use of time travel in the genre, from The Time Machine to Doctor Who. With David Tennant, Christopher Lloyd and Scott Bakula. Last in the series. **10.45 Film: Let Me In.** (2010) Horror remake, starring Chloë Grace Moretz and Kodi Smit-McPhee. **12.35 Film: Forbidden Planet.** (1956) 2.10 This is BBC Two.

ITV

6.00 CITV: The Aquabats! Super Show! 6.25 Pat & Stan. (R) 6.35 Pat & Stan. (R) 6.40 Dino Dan: Trek's Adventures. (R) 7.05 Canimals. (R) 7.10 Signed Stories: Share a Story. (R) 7.15 Sooty. (R) 7.25 Mr Bean: The Animated Series. (R) 7.40 Text Santa: Little Helpers. (R) 7.45 Hulk and the Agents of Smash. 8.10 Text Santa: Little Helpers. (R) 8.15 Horrid Henry. 8.30 The Munch Box. 9.25 Dinner Date. (R) 10.20 Murder, She Wrote. (R) 11.15 ITV News: Weather. **11.20 Film: Columbo: Fade in to Murder.** (1976) Crime drama, starring Peter Falk. 1.55 Film: Mannequin. (1987) Fantasy comedy, starring Andrew McCarthy. 3.50 Film: Harry Potter and the Prisoner of Azkaban. (2004) Fantasy adventure, starring Daniel Radcliffe. **6.30 Regional Programme: Weather.** 6.40 ITV News: Weather. **6.55 New You've Been Framed!** 7.25 The Chase: Christmas Special. Bradley Walsh hosts a festive edition with actors Steve Pemberton and Ben Miller, Coronation Street's Paula Lane (Kylie) and Educating Yorkshire's Mr Burton. Last in the series. **8.30 The X Factor.** They vowed the judges at the double auditions, survived the six-chair challenge and made it through nine weeks of live studio rounds. Now, the three remaining acts head to Wembley Arena to battle it out in the first part of the final. Viewers can also expect performances by some of the biggest names in the charts across the two shows, including Madonna if rumours are to be believed. At the end of the programme, Dermot O'Leary announces the results of the public vote and the contestant in third place is eliminated. Concludes tomorrow at 8pm. **10.35 The Jonathan Ross Show.** With former X Factor judge Tulisa Contostavlos, actor and comedian James Corden, Mad Men star Jon Hamm, Celebrity Juice host Keith Lemon and music by singer-songwriter Paloma Faith. **11.40 ITV News: Weather.** **11.55 Film: Balls of Fury.** (2007) The FBI recruits a washed-up former ping-pong champion to infiltrate an underground tournament run by a criminal mastermind. Comedy, starring Dan Fogler. **1.30 Jackpot247.** 3.00 The Jeremy Kyle Show USA. (R) 3.40 ITV Nightscreen.

CHANNEL 4

6.10 NFL: Rush Zone. 6.35 Trans World Sport. 7.30 Survival of the Fittest. 7.55 The Morning Line. 9.00 Weekend Kitchen. 10.00 Frasier. (R) 10.30 Frasier. (R) 11.00 The Big Bang Theory. (R) 11.30 The Simpsons. (R) 12.00 The Simpsons. (R) 12.30 Marvel's Agents of SHIELD. (R) 1.30 Channel 4 Racing. Live coverage from Cheltenham and Doncaster. 3.55 Come Dine with Me. (R) 4.25 Come Dine with Me. (R) 4.55 Come Dine with Me. (R) 5.25 Come Dine with Me. (R) 5.55 Channel 4 News. **6.00 100 Greatest Toys with Jonathan Ross.** A countdown of the nation's favourite games, gadgets and playthings, as decided by a Channel 4 online poll. Inventors and toy-makers tell the inside stories of their creations and successes – including Action Man, Yahtzee, Barbie and Trivial Pursuit – while the children of yesteryear, namely today's celebrities, authors, actors and journalists, take a nostalgic look back at the toys they loved. Also revealed is the inspiration behind the design of the Raleigh Chopper, the unlikely individual responsible for the creation of one of the world's toughest action figures, and why the Vietnam War almost brought Britain's Matchbox car range to an end. (R) **9.00 Film: Hope Springs.** (2012) Premiere. A middle-aged married woman feels her long-standing relationship with her unadventurous husband is becoming stale. When she hears of a marriage counsellor offering therapy sessions in his remote retreat, she persuades her reluctant spouse to join her for a week with the doctor rediscovering why they fell in love in the first place. Romantic comedy, with Meryl Streep, Tommy Lee Jones and Steve Carell. **11.00 Film: An Officer and a Gentleman.** (1982) A Navy recruit has an uneasy romance with a factory worker and is pushed to his limits by a tough sergeant. Romantic drama, starring Richard Gere, Debra Winger and Louis Gossett Jr. **1.20 Film: Q&A.** (1990) Thriller, with Nick Nolte, Timothy Hutton and Armand Assante. 3.35 Holyoaks. Omnibus. Ste returns to the village. (R) 5.45 NFL: Rush Zone. Animation about a young American football fan.

CHANNEL 5

6.00 Milkshake! 9.45 Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles. (R) 10.20 Access. 10.30 World Strongman Championship. (R) 11.25 Film: Ice Age: The Meltdown. (2006) 1.10 Film: The Christmas Bunny. (2010) Premiere. Family drama, starring Sophie Bolen. 2.55 Film: Angels and Ornaments. (2014) Premiere. Romantic fantasy, starring Jessalyn Gilsig. 4.40 Film: Mrs Miracle 2: Miracle in Manhattan. (2010) Family drama sequel, starring Doris Roberts. **6.30 Film: Misteloe Over Manhattan.** (2011) Santa Claus's wife goes to New York to perform a Christmas miracle and give her husband fresh inspiration. She befriends a cop who is in the middle of a divorce and offers to become a nanny to his children. She then discovers he still loves his wife, and tries to find a way to bring them back together. Seasonal fantasy, starring Tricia Helfer and Greg Kinnear. **8.15 My Crazy Christmas Obsession.** Documentary following four American households who take festive decorations to the extreme, spending huge amounts of money, time and energy on their properties to bring Christmas cheer to their neighbourhoods. In Oklahoma, Shay has 168 trees of all shapes and sizes in her home, festooned with more than 50,000 ornaments and 100,000 fairy lights. (R) **9.05 5 News Weekend.** **9.10 TV's 50 Greatest Magic Tricks.** TV illusionists have been saving ladies in half, catching bullets between their teeth, reading minds and performing feats of escapology for decades. Channel 5 counts down the best, including the astonishing set-pieces of Penn and Teller, the mind-bending of Derren Brown and the street magic of David Blaine. It features spectacular illusions, such as making the Statue of Liberty disappear, intimate card tricks and the lighter side of the business, thanks to the inclusion of comedy great Tommy Cooper. Paul Daniels and Dynamo also appear in this magic compendium, with contributions from Joe Pasquale, Dick and Dom, and Stephen Mulhern. (R) **12.05 SuperCasino.** 3.10 Gotham. (R) 4.00 House Doctor. (R) 4.25 Make It Big. (R) 5.15 Angels of Jarm. (R) 5.40 Roary the Racing Car. (R)

DIGITAL

BBC Three
7.00 Doctor Who 8.00 Top Gear 9.10 Sherlock 10.40 Live at the Apollo 11.10 Family Guy 12.55 American Dad! 1.20 Some Girls 1.45 Sweat the Small Stuff 2.15 Live at the Apollo 2.45 In Deep 3.00 How Safe Are My Drugs? 4.00 Close **BBC Four**
7.00 Ice Age Giants 8.00 Sex and Sensibility: The Allure of Art Nouveau 9.00 Inspector Montalbano 10.50 The Richest Songs in the World 12.20 Sounds of the Sixties 1.20 Top of the Pops: 1979 1.55 Ice Age Giants 2.55 Sex and Sensibility: The Allure of Art Nouveau 3.55 Close **ITV2**
11.20 The Cube: Celebrity Special 12.20 You've Been Framed! 12.50 Film: Twins (1988) 3.00 Film: Secret Santa (2003) 4.50 You've Been Framed! at Christmas! 7.00 Film: Pearl Harbor (2001) 10.35 The Xtra Factor 11.35 Celebrity Juice: Christmas Special 12.35 The X Factor 2.35 Nicole Scherzinger: The Hot Desk 2.45 Teleshopping 5.45 ITV2 Nightscreen **ITV3**
1.00 A Touch of Frost 3.00 Agatha Christie's Marple 7.00 Rosemary & Thyme 8.00 Doc Martin 9.00 Foyle's War 11.00 A Touch of Frost 1.00 Bomb Girls 1.50 Movies Now 2.00 ITV3 Nightscreen 2.30 Teleshopping **ITV4**
11.25 Alias Smith and Jones 12.30 Film: Paths of Glory (1957) 2.20 Film: Captain Newman MD (1964) 5.00 Live FIA Formula E Championship. The Pao del Este Prix. 7.30 Film: Licence to Kill (1989) 10.15 Film: Scarface (1983) 1.35 Alias Smith and Jones 2.40 Movies Now 2.50 ITV4 Nightscreen 3.00 Teleshopping **E4**
11.00 Melissa & Joey 1.00 Film: First Daughter (2004) 3.15 Rude (ish) Tube Shorts 3.30 Made in Chelsea 4.35 Melissa & Joey 5.30 How I Met Your Mother 6.30 The Big Bang Theory 9.00 Film: The Mechanic (2011) 10.50 Rude Tube 11.55 The Inbetweeners 1.05 The Cleveland Show 3.15 Rules of Engagement 4.00 Happy Endings 4.45 The 100 **Film4**
11.00 Hills of Home (1948) 1.00 Runaway Bride (1999) 3.20 Silent Running (1972) 5.10 Big (1988) 7.15 Post Grad (2009) 9.00 Safe House (2012) 11.15 Shost: The Spirit of Vengeance (2011) 1.05 Working Girl (1988) 3.25 Close



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CHOICE



Sports Personality of the Year 2014 (BBC1, 8pm)
If English football supporters can put aside for a second their disappointment over the failure of Roy Hodgson's men to make their mark in Brazil during the summer, it's been another remarkable year for British sport. Rory McIlroy won two of golf's major tournaments, Lizzy Yarnold secured gold at the Winter Olympics and Glasgow hosted the Commonwealth Games, at which Jo Pavey won a bronze medal in the 5,000m before being crowned the 10,000m champion at the European Championships. Cameras return to Glasgow for the Sports Personality of the Year event. Any of those could lift the trophy, but the smart money is probably on Lewis Hamilton following his second Formula One championship title.

BBC1

6.00 Breakfast. **7.35** Match of the Day. (R) **9.00** The Andrew Marr Show. **10.00** Fern Britton Meets Baroness Tanni Grey-Thompson. **11.00** Sunday Politics. **12.15** MOTD2 Extra. With Mark Chapman and the Match of the Day team. **1.00** BBC News: Weather. **1.15** Bargain Hunt. **2.15** Homes Under the Hammer. (R) **3.15** Escape to the Country. (R) **4.15** Liffeline. **4.25** Songs of Praise. **5.00** Pointless Celebrities. (R) **5.50** BBC News: Regional News: Weather.
6.20 **Countryfile**. The team is in the Chwydian range in north Wales, where Ellie Harrison meets schoolchildren running their own chicken farm and Matt Baker joins a conservation team in the uplands. Including Weather for the Week Ahead.
7.20 **Strictly Come Dancing: The Results**. Tess Daly and Claudia Winkelman present as five become four, determining the line-up for next week's final, and there is a performance by Paloma Faith.
8.00 **Sports Personality of the Year 2014**. Gary Lineker, Gabby Logan and Clare Balding present this year's ceremony live from the Hydro Arena in Glasgow, where the successor to Andy Murray will be crowned. The contenders for the main prize include Rory McIlroy, who dominated the golfing scene and won two of the year's four Majors, Lewis Hamilton, whose victories on the way to title glory saw him surpass Nigel Mansell as the British driver to have won the most Formula 1 races, and Winter Olympic champion Lizzy Yarnold, who claimed gold in the skeleton. The other nominees are Gareth Bale, Max Whitlock, Adam Peaty, Carl Froch, Charlotte Dujardin, Jo Pavey, plus Paralympic skier Kelly Gallagher and guide Charlotte Evans. Subsequent programmes subject to change.
10.20 BBC News: Regional News: Weather.
10.45 **Match of the Day 2**. Mark Chapman reviews the latest Premier League action, including Manchester United v Liverpool and Swansea City v Tottenham Hotspur.
11.45 **The Apprentice**. (R)
12.45 **Film**: It's a Wonderful Afterlife. (2010) **2.20** Weather for the Week Ahead. **2.25** BBC News.

BBC2

6.00 Animal Park. (R) **6.30** Match of the Day at 50. (R) **7.35** Life in a Cottage Garden with Carol Klein. (R) **8.05** Countryfile. (R) **9.00** The Football League Show. (R) **10.20** Saturday Kitchen Best Bites. **11.50** Rick Stein's Christmas Special. (R) **12.50** James Martin's Food Map of Britain. (R) **1.00** The Rockford Files. (R) **1.50** Film: Funny Lady. (1975) Musical comedy sequel, starring Barbra Streisand. **4.05** Film: Emma. (1996) Jane Austen drama, starring Gwyneth Paltrow.
6.00 **Sports Personality of the Year at 60**. Gary Lineker presents a look at the history of the ceremony, which has become a sports and broadcasting institution since first being held in 1954. Former winners including Steve Redgrave, Princess Anne and Sebastian Coe recall their memories of the show. Des Lynam discusses his years presenting the awards and Sue Barker is among the contributors remembering the special awards given to the likes of Muhammad Ali and Bobby Robson. (R)
7.00 **James May's Toy Stories: Flight Club**. The Top Gear presenter investigates the enduring appeal of the model aeroplane and sets out to break the British record for the longest flight by a toy glider. (R)
8.00 **Film: What Women Want**. (2000) A freak accident gives a womanising executive the ability to hear the thoughts of the opposite sex. Embittered after losing out on promotion to a female colleague, he uses his new-found talent to exact revenge – but the insight it provides ultimately brings out an unexpected sensitive side. Romantic comedy, starring Mel Gibson, Helen Hunt, with Marisa Tomei, Alan Alda and Bette Midler.
10.00 **Russell Howard's Good News**. The comedian offers his perspective on stories dominating the media. (R)
10.30 **Film: Mrs Henderson Presents**. (2005) A widow invests her fortune in an abandoned London theatre and defies censorship laws to stage a controversial nude revue. Fact-based comedy drama, with Judi Dench and Bob Hoskins.
12.10 **Film**: A Walk to Remember. (2002) **1.45** Sign Zone. Countryfile. (R) **2.45** Holby City. (R) **3.45** This Is BBC Two.

ITV

6.00 CITV: The Aquabats! Super Show!
6.25 Pat & Stan. (R) **6.35** Pat & Stan. (R) **6.40** Dino Dan: Trek's Adventures. (R) **6.50** Dino Dan: Trek's Adventures. (R) **7.05** Canimals. (R) **7.10** Signed Stories: Share a Story. (R) **7.15** Sooty. (R) **7.25** Mr Bean: The Animated Series. (R) **7.40** Text Santa: Little Helpers. (R) **7.45** Ultimate Spider-Man. **8.10** Text Santa: Little Helpers. (R) **8.15** Horrid Henry. **8.30** Big Time Rush. **9.00** The Aquabats! Super Show! (R) **9.25** ITV News. **9.30** Dickinson's Real Deal. (R) **10.25** Murder, She Wrote. (R) **11.25** ITV News: Weather. (R) **11.30** Problem Child. (1990) Comedy, starring John Ritter. **1.05** Tipping Point. (R) **2.05** You've Been Framed! (R) **2.35** The X Factor. (R) **4.40** Film: Death Becomes Her. (1992) Black comedy fantasy, starring Goldie Hawn and Meryl Streep.
6.35 **Regional Programme**: Weather.
6.45 **ITV News**: Weather.
7.00 **Catchphrase Christmas Special**. Former glamour model Katie Price, actor-presenter Warwick Davis and panto king Christopher Biggins line up to "see it and say it" as they try to guess the familiar phrases hidden in festive-themed animated clues and win thousands of pounds for their chosen charities. Stephen Mulhern hosts.
8.00 **The X Factor Results**. With part one of the final behind them, this is the last chance for the two remaining acts to impress the public in the race to become this year's X Factor winner. The judges offer their comments as usual, but the result is entirely in viewers' hands, and at the end of the programme, Dermot O'Leary reveals which of these aspiring pop stars will walk away with the prize of a record deal. There are also performances by more world-famous acts, sending the show out on a high. Last in the series.
10.05 **Film: The Holiday**. (2006) Two single women from opposite sides of the Atlantic find love after they swap houses over Christmas. Romantic comedy, with Cameron Diaz and Kate Winslet, Jack Black and Jude Law. Continues after the News.
11.05 **ITV News**: Weather.
11.20 **Film: The Holiday**. (2006) Concluded.
12.45 The Store. Home shopping. **2.30** Motorsport UK. **3.20** The Jeremy Kyle Show USA. (R) **4.05** ITV Nightscreen. **5.05** The Jeremy Kyle Show. (R)

CHANNEL 4

6.10 NFL: The American Football Show. (R) **7.10** How I Met Your Mother. (R) **7.35** How I Met Your Mother. (R) **8.00** Everybody Loves Raymond. (R) **8.30** Frasier. (R) **9.00** Jamie's Comfort Food. (R) **9.30** Sunday Brunch. **12.30** The Big Bang Theory. (R) **1.00** The Big Bang Theory. (R) **1.25** The Simpsons. (R) **2.00** The Simpsons. (R) **2.30** The Simpsons. (R) **3.00** Film: 10 Things I Hate About You. (1999) Comedy, starring Heath Ledger and Julia Stiles.
5.00 **Film**: Night at the Museum: Battle of the Smithsonian. (2009) Fantasy comedy sequel, starring Ben Stiller.
7.05 **Channel 4 News**.
7.30 **Britain's Wildest Weather 2014**. This year, the nation has been hit by tornados, floods, hurricanes and ferocious storms, as well as the chilliest August in more than two decades, but the public has also enjoyed the hottest Halloween on record. This documentary presents eyewitness footage of an unpredictable 12 months, featuring rescues at sea, homes struck by lightning, an escape for 500 cows, and sea foam that engulfs a bus. There's also a look at the science behind these wild weather events and why there may be worse to come.
9.00 **Homeland**. The security breach at the embassy has a number of far-reaching consequences as the fourth series of the CIA thriller continues. Claire Danes, Rupert Friend and Mandy Patinkin star.
10.00 **Film: Insidious**. (2010) A family driven from their house by a haunting discover the spirits have followed them to their new home and put their son into a coma. Horror, with Patrick Wilson and Rose Byrne.
12.00 Alan Carr: Chatty Man. The host is joined by Stephen Fry and Clare Balding, talking about their new books, and Micky Flanagan, discussing his latest DVD. Plus, Gorgon City perform with Jennifer Hudson. (R) **1.00** American Football Live. Philadelphia Eagles v Dallas Cowboys (Kick-off 1.30am). Coverage of the week 15 fixture from Lincoln Financial Field, where the NFC East rivals face each other. **4.45** NFL: Rush Zone. Animation about a young American football fan who must protect shards of a power source called The Core, which is hidden in various NFL stadiums. **5.10** Face the Clock. (R) **5.35** Countdown. Words-and-numbers game, with Dictionary Corner guest Arlene Phillips. (R)

CHANNEL 5

6.00 Milkshake!: Peppa Pig. **6.05** Roary the Racing Car. (R) **6.15** Angelina Ballerina. (R) **6.30** Pip Ahoy! (R) **6.40** The Mr Men Show. (R) **6.55** Chloe's Closet. (R) **7.05** Only the Little White Van. (R) **7.10** Bananas in Pyjamas. (R) **7.25** Make Way for Noddy. (R) **7.35** Paw Patrol. **7.50** Milkshake! Monkey. (R) **8.00** Little Princess. (R) **8.10** The Adventures of Bottle Top Bill and His Best Friend Corky. (R) **8.20** Wanda and the Alien. **8.35** Mio Mao. (R) **8.40** Zack and Quack. **8.50** Bert and Ernie's Great Adventures. (R) **9.00** Ben and Holly's Little Kingdom. (R) **10.00** Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles. (R) **10.35** Access. (R) **10.45** Police Interceptors. (R) **11.45** Police Interceptors. (R) **12.40** Film: Dear Secret Santa. (2013) Premiere. Drama, starring Tatyana Ali. **2.30** Film: Deck the Halls. (2006) Christmas comedy, starring Danny DeVito and Matthew Broderick. **4.20** Film: Paper Angels. (2014) Premiere. Festive drama, starring Josie Bissett.
6.15 **Film: A Christmas Kiss**. (2011) Premiere. An aspiring designer impulsively kisses a man she meets in a lift, only to discover he is her boss's boyfriend. She is given the task of decorating his house for a lavish Christmas party, but begins to fall in love with him – while he does not remember their previous encounter. Romantic drama, with Laura Breckenridge, Brendan Fehr and Elisabeth Rohm.
8.00 **The Abba Years**. Documentary exploring the success of the Swedish group, featuring interviews with the band members and footage of concerts and stage shows. Filmed in Sweden and London, the programme explores the flamboyant outfits, chart-topping music, successful spin-offs, marriages and break-ups. (R)
9.00 **Michael Buble's Christmas Special**. The Grammy-winning Canadian crooner performs classic festive songs. (R)
9.55 **5 News Weekend**.
10.00 **Britain's Favourite Christmas Songs**. A countdown of songs guaranteed to make any Christmas party go with a swing, including classics by the Jackson 5, Jona Lewie, Band Aid, Mud, the Pogues and Kirsty MacColl and Slade. (R)
1.00 Abba: In Concert. (R) **2.00** SuperCasino. **3.10** World Strongman Championship. (R) **4.00** House Doctor. (R) **4.25** Make It Big. (R) **5.15** Angels of Jarm. (R) **5.40** Roary the Racing Car. (R)

DIGITAL

BBC Three
7.00 Great TV Mistakes **7.30** Doctor Who: The Ultimate Guide **7.40** Doctor Who: The Day of the Doctor **9.00** Top Gear: Polar Challenge **10.00** Family Guy **10.45** American Dad! **11.30** Some Girls **12.00** Sweet The Small Stuff **12.30** How Safe Are My Drugs? **1.30** The Revolution Will Be Televised **2.00** Some Girls
BBC Four
7.00 The Fairytale Castles of King Ludwig II with Dan Cruickshank **8.00** Rome: A History of the Eternal City **9.00** Pompeii: The Mystery of the People Frozen in Time **10.00** Pillars of Creation – The Sky at Night **10.30** Queen: Days of Our Lives **12.30** Great American Rock Anthems: Turn It Up to 11 **1.30** Sounds of the Eighties **2.00** Natural World Special: Miracle in the Marshes of Iraq
ITV2
11.00 The X Factor **1.10** The Xtra Factor **2.10** Kylie Minogue: The Hot Desk **2.25** Film: Santa Baby (2006) **4.15** Film: Beethoven's Christmas Adventure (2011) **6.00** Film: The Polar Express (2004) **8.00** Scorpion **9.00** Educating Joey Essex: Winter Essex-Pedition **10.00** The Xtra Factor **11.00** Through the Christmas Keyhole **12.05** Film: American Pie Presents: The Naked Mile (2006) **2.10** The Vampire Diaries
ITV3
11.35 A Touch of Frost **1.35** Rosemary & Thyme **2.40** Agatha Christie's Marple **4.50** Film: Columbo: Forgotten Lady (1975) **6.50** Inspector Morse **9.00** Lewis **11.00** Cracker **1.15** Film: The Count of Monte Cristo (2002)
ITV4
11.35 Film: Captain Newman MD (1964) **2.10** Film: Ice Cold in Alex (1958) **4.50** Film: The Battle of Midway (1976) **7.30** Storage Wars **9.00** Film: Doom (2005) **11.05** Film: Species: The Awakening (2007) **1.10** River Monsters **2.10** Nitro Circus **2.50** ITV4 Nightscreen
E4
12.30 Made in Chelsea **1.30** Film: Step Up 3 (2010) **3.50** Rude(ish) Tube Shorts **4.00** Melissa & Joey **5.00** Brooklyn Nine-Nine **6.00** The Big Bang Theory **10.00** The Inbetweeners **11.10** Bad Robots **11.40** How I Met Your Mother **1.35** Rules of Engagement **2.30** The Cleveland Show
Film4
11.00 Dragoon Wells Massacre (1957) **1.00** The First Wives Club (1996) **3.05** Anastasia (1997) **5.00** Honey, I Blew Up the Kid (1982) **6.45** Percy Jackson & the Lightning Thief (2010) **9.00** Good Will Hunting (1997) **11.25** Good Morning, Vietnam (1987) **1.50** Sweetgrass (2009)

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MONDAY
The Real St Nick, Channel 5, 2pm
An injured man is brought into hospital dressed as Father Christmas, and when he comes round, he claims to really be Santa, landing himself in the psychiatric ward. Romantic comedy, with Torrey DeVitto and Callard Harris. (2012)

TUESDAY
Harry Potter and the Order of the Phoenix, ITV, 7.30pm
The young wizard struggles to convince his fellow sorcerers that the evil Lord Voldemort has returned to life. Fantasy adventure sequel, starring Daniel Radcliffe, Emma Watson, Rupert Grint, Gary Oldman, Michael Gambon and Alan Rickman. (2007)

Waterworld, ITV, 10.40pm
In the future, environmental disasters have left the planet flooded. A web-footed mutant mariner helps a woman and an orphan girl search for a mythical haven of dry land – but in the process has to fend off a villainous crew of nicotine-addicted pirates. Sci-fi adventure, starring Kevin Costner, Dennis Hopper, Jeanne Tripplehorn and Rick Aviles. (1995)



Waterworld, Tuesday, ITV, 10.40pm

WEDNESDAY
The Bandit of Sherwood Forest, Channel 4, 2.35am
The son of Robin Hood reunites his father's merry men to carry out a rescue mission at the request of the Queen Mother. Swashbuckling adventure, starring Cornel Wilde and Anita Louise. (1946)

THURSDAY
Mr St Nick, Channel 5, 11.40am
Father Christmas decides it is time to hang up his hat and hand the reins of the family business over to his son – who is less than enthusiastic about donning the famed red suit, throwing the future of the festive season into doubt. Festive comedy, starring Kelsey Grammer, Charles Durning and Elaine Hendrix. (2002)

FRIDAY
Shoot 'Em Up, Channel 5, 10.50pm
A gun-toting mysterious stranger delivers a baby, which he is forced to protect from a horde of heavily armed assassins. Enlisting the aid of a prostitute, he sets out to discover why the child has been marked for death. Action adventure, starring Clive Owen, Paul Giamatti and Monica Bellucci. (2007)

Jonathan is dishing out the gags and the gongs

Jonathan Ross fronts the 25th annual British Comedy Awards, and as you may have guessed, there's a wealth of comedic talent up for the assorted plaudits.

Among them is Joe Wilkinson, who's in the running with Matt Berry, Nick Helm and Harry Peacock for Best Comedy Breakthrough Artist.

The hirsute funnyman has become a TV regular over the last couple of years, popping up in sublime sitcom Him & Her, and assorted panel games, including Have I Got News For You and 8 Out of 10 Cats Does Countdown (both of which are up for Best Comedy Panel Programme).

But how did the Kent-born actor and comic make the leap from graphic designer to professional rib-ticker?

"I kind of enjoyed it (graphic design), but my heart was elsewhere," he explains. "I'd like to say that I orchestrated it, and it was all a big plan, but I wasn't really."

Joe had wanted to try his hand at comedy, but thought it was a club reserved for other people, until one fateful evening.

"My local pub was putting on open mic stand-up nights, so I went on and thought maybe I'll try but I won't tell anyone, and it was genuinely to go, 'Right, I've done it. Like a bungee jump sort of thing.'"

After his routine, Joe was amazed when he was asked if he wanted to do it again in the coming weeks.

"I thought: 'Oh, I hadn't really thought about doing it again.' So I did that a few months later, and then someone else booked me and it just sort of kept going.

"People kept booking me and I have no recollection of my first gig. I'm almost certain it wasn't brilliant," he laughs. "So it sort of just carried on from there. I'd love to say I had my five-point plan. I'm still sort of winging it if I'm honest."

Back to the Awards, and given the fact Will Ferrell was worshipped at last year's bash, there's no surprise to find last year's Anchorman 2 in the running for Best Comedy Film.

However, in case you're wondering why your favourite show or film from late September 2014 onwards isn't in the running this year, there's a good reason: programmes or performances must have had their first transmission in the UK between September 24, 2013 and September 22, 2014 on terrestrial, cable, satellite or digital channels.

Special gongs include The Writers' Guild of Great Britain Award (WGGB); Outstanding Achievement in Comedy; Lifetime Achievement in Comedy (the Python team may be in the running given their O2 gigs), and The King/Queen of Comedy.

Aisling Bea recently proved to be a superb guest on Never Mind the Buzzcocks, but will she manage to eclipse the likes of Bridget Christie, Isy Suttie or (2013 winner) Nina Conti in the Best Female Television Comic stakes?

Viewers should expect the unexpected, the unplanned and the unruly as some of the nation's favourite stars pick up their awards.

That remains to be seen, but one thing is for certain: as this year saw the passing of showbiz greats Robin Williams and Rik Mayall, there's bound to be a poignant moment as two of the best loved funnymen are remembered.



The British Comedy Awards 2014, Wednesday, Channel 4, 9pm

BEST OF THE REST

MONDAY
Bette Midler: One Night Only, ITV, 9pm
It's hard to believe that The Divine Miss M is a year shy of her 70th birthday – okay, so she's only just turned 69, we'll give her that – but in all this time in the limelight, she's never done a UK television special before. Until now. It's been 42 years since Midler released her debut album, so she's bound to have plenty of stories for us tonight, as she chats about her life and career. The Grammy Award-winner will also be performing her various hits, including Wind Beneath My Wings and From a Distance, as well as songs from her new album, It's the Girls, including a cover of The Ronettes' Be My Baby. The whole thing is hosted by Joanna Lumley.

Steph and Dom Meet Nigel Farage, Channel 4, 10pm
Steph and Dom Parker, owners of plush B&B The Salutation, have caused quite the stir on telly favourite Gogglebox. So what would happen if they were to come face to face with another of Britain's most opinionated personalities, UKIP's Nigel Farage? Wonder no more... This spin-off sees the Parkers joined by their local MP candidate, Farage, in a wine-fuelled evening, that's sure to leave him rather hot under the collar, thanks to all the questions they have got lined up for him.

TUESDAY
Black Mirror: White Christmas, Channel 4, 9pm
Charlie Brooker's dark drama series may seem like an odd choice to be given a Christmas special. However, there is a proud tradition of TV channels scaring us at Christmas, it's just that Brooker tends to do it via bleak visions of the future rather than ghost stories. This feature-length instalment brings us three yarns for the price of one, as in a remote, snowy outpost, charismatic Matt (Mad Men's Jon Hamm) and secretive Potter (Rafe Spall) swap tales about their lives on the outside world.

The Missing, BBC1, 9pm
Michael Palin's recent supernatural drama Remember Me may have been spooky, but some parents would probably argue that The Missing has been the most terrifying series of 2014. Poor Tony (James Nesbitt) only took his eyes of his five-year-old son for a split second in a crowded bar, but it was long enough for the youngster to disappear without a trace. Now, the investigation comes to an end, but will Tony, Emily and Julien finally get the answers they've been waiting for?



Bette Midler: One Night Only, Monday, ITV, 9pm

WEDNESDAY
Surprise Surprise, ITV, 8pm
Pop supergroup McBusted surprise one of their biggest fans with a performance on top of London's O2 arena, and former JLS member Marvin Humes makes a dream come true for an inspiring aid worker who came to the rescue of a Somerset village devastated by floods. Holly Willoughby presents.

THURSDAY
George Clarke's Amazing Christmas Spaces, Channel 4, 8pm
Architect George Clarke loves this series – it brings him into contact with some amazingly inventive souls who have dreamed up some mind-boggling projects, and usually on a budget. George rounds off the series with some builds with a Christmas theme. He's off

to visit a 130-year-old tin church, one of the earliest takes on flat-pack construction in the country. His mate Will Hardie takes a tour of another chapel, although this one has been transformed into a luxury home. The guys then help the UK's only female ice carver create a winter wonderland ice bar in Liverpool before looking back at their favourite builds of the series over drinks in Joel Favord's Shed of the Year-winning construction.

FRIDAY
Text Santa, ITV, 8pm
The festive fundraising extravaganza returns, with the evening's presenting duos – Ant and Dec, Phillip Schofield and Christine Bleakley, and Paddy McGuinness and Alesha Dixon – joined by a host of famous faces to raise money for six deserving causes. Highlights include George Clooney making a surprise visit to Downton Abbey, the residents of Coronation Street appearing in a comedy sketch with a Text Santa twist, and Ant and Dec hosting a Yule Tucker Trial for an unsuspecting celebrity while serenaded by a choir of former jungle contestants. The Birds of a Feather stars also get involved, The Cube welcomes some unexpected visitors and there are appearances by the casts of Mr Selfridge and Emmerdale, plus plenty of live music throughout the show.

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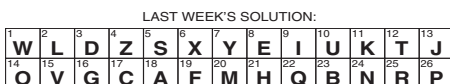
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An Express & Star supplement

Express & Star

25 The Chronicle Thursday, December 11, 2014

Each number in the grid represents a different letter of the alphabet and every letter of the alphabet is used. Use the given letter(s) to the right of the main grid to start you off.



Choose either quick or cryptic clues - both fit the same grid.

Across

1. The Sahara Express! (5,5)
7. Learner gets horribly sore, because he's been beaten (5)
8. French brass-hat sounds warlike (7)
10. Marks of superiority in various respects (8)
11. This is used for shooting slow-moving creature (4)
13. Furtively take one's leave of French settlement (6)
15. Robber gang is in front of it (6)
- 17 & 18Ac.** A way of acquiring goods that sounds more expensive (4-8)
- 18 See 17 Across
21. One of the key players (7)
22. Curses a shot that has gone astray (5)
23. A storm seen to disturb a grampus (3-7)

Down

1. The social distinction of dramatic characters, we hear (5)
2. Record the hour, but make no progress (4,4)
3. Make flexible part of a gun carriage (6)
4. A combination of artist and engineer is seldom found (4)
5. Indulged in some inspiration? (7)
6. Union policy, maybe, shut down the store (6,4)
9. Lines in illuminated letters? (5,5)
12. Beware when the guard has gone forth! (5,3)
14. Concern about horse for slaughter (7)
16. Name the man who's very narrowly elected! (6)
19. See 20 Down
- 20 & 19Dn. He takes part on a set assignment (4,5)



Across

1. Recover (10)
7. Mountain ash (5)
8. Case (7)
10. Awful (8)
11. Correct (4)
13. Impel (6)
15. Run (6)
17. Sole (4)
18. Unfounded (8)
21. Rescuer (7)
22. Lift (5)
23. Competent (10)

Down

1. Oarsman (5)
2. Persuade (8)
3. Preserve (6)
4. Gown (4)
5. Shoot (7)
6. Voluntary (10)
9. Done wrong (10)
12. Unworried (8)
14. Transfer (7)
16. Structure (6)
19. Throw out (5)
20. Be idle (4)

	5	4		6				
		7		2		4	9	
	8			5	9			
	7				6	2	1	
4			7		1			3
		6	5				4	
	3		6	9			2	
	2	1		7		5		9
						8	7	

Fill in the grid below so that every column, every row and each of the 3x3 boxes contains all the digits from 1 to 9.

LAST WEEK'S
SOLUTIONS >

1	3	2	9	4	6	8	7
7	9	6	1	8	5	3	4
8	4	5	2	7	3	1	9
3	7	9	8	5	2	4	6
5	1	4	7	6	9	2	3
2	6	8	3	1	4	9	5
6	5	3	4	2	8	7	1
9	2	1	5	3	7	6	8
4	8	7	6	9	1	5	2

LAST WEEK'S CROSSWORD SOLUTIONS:
 CRYPTIC - Across: 6 Capital; 7 Share; 9 Act; 10
 Cross-word; 12 Charge-hands; 15 Cheval-glass;
 17 Hair style; 19 For: 21 Beans; 22 Haricot.
 Down: 1 Catch; 2 Fig; 3 Fair; 4 Show cause; 5
 Grenade; 8 As well; 11 Shivering; 13 Relate; 14
 Phrases; 16 Donor; 18 Leaf; 20 Bed. QUICK -
 Across: 6 Proceed; 7 Salad; 9 Fee; 10 Enlighten;
 12 Persevering; 15 Indifferent; 17 Architect; 19
 Try; 21 Steer; 22 Penalty. Down: 1 Order; 2
 Act; 3 Act; 4 Smothering; 5 Pageant; 8 Silo;
 11 Delighted; 13 Safety; 14 Untruth; 16 rate; 18
 Crew; 20 Raw.

1. Which German Nazi was known as the Butcher of Lyon?
2. By which name do we know the aquatic rodent Castor fiber?
3. Which fictional hero was created by Baroness Orczy?
4. Whose convalescent visit gave Bognor its Regis?
5. Which fabric causes the lung disease byssinosis?
6. Which popular cricket commentator died in January 1994?
7. Who, in Greek mythology, was the father of Jupiter, Neptune and Pluto?
8. Which author wrote J'Accuse, which concerned the Dreyfus affair?
9. What relationship is Oliver Reed to director Carol Reed?
10. Which city contains the residential district Beverly Hills?

Last week's solutions:

Quiz: 1 76 years; 2 Post scriptum; 3

Everton: 4 William Burroughs: 5 Felicity

Kendal: 6 Henrik Ibsen: 7 Jamaica: 8 Denis

Healey: 9 Greece: 10 Leicestershire:

Niner: PITEOUSLY

Each number from 1 to 9 represents a different letter. Solve the clues and insert the letters in the appropriate squares to discover a word which uses all nine letters.

1322 gives an animal,
57796 gives a bird,
5345678 gives a fish.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---

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The Chronicle Thursday, December 11, 2014

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Four Bedroom Semi. Comprises Of Entrance Hall, Lounge, Kitchen/Diner, Conservatory, Integral Garage/Storage Area And Family Bathroom. D/G & G/C/H. Double Driveway. Rear Garden.

£650 PCM

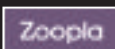
LET SIMILAR PROPERTIES REQUIRED

DERWENT CLOSE, W'HALL
Three Bed Detached. Comprises Of Entrance Porch, Entrance Hall, W.C., Lounge, Dining Room, Kitchen & Utility Room. En-Suite To Master, Family Bathroom. Ample Off Road Parking To The Front And An Enclosed Garden To The Rear.

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Ground Floor Plan

First Floor Plan

FOR SALE



£129,995

36 Kings Road, Rushall, Walsall, WS4 1JB MODERNISED MID-TERRACED HOUSE

- Four Bedrooms
- Lounge
- Dining Room
- Brand New Fitted Kitchen
- Gas Central Heating
- Bathroom
- UPVC Double Glazing
- Front & Rear Gardens
- Outside W.C and Outhouses
- Newly Redecorated Throughout
- Brand new Carpets
- No Chain
- EPC D

FOR SALE



£125,000

106 Alexandra Road, Walsall, WS1 4AZ EXTENDED SEMI-DETACHED HOUSE

- Three Bedrooms
- Lounge
- Dining Room
- Fitted Kitchen
- Family Bathroom
- Downstairs W.C
- Driveway
- Enclosed Rear Garden
- Double Glazing
- Gas Central Heating
- EPC D



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PROPERTY OF THE WEEK



EPC: E

WALSALL WEST BROMWICH ROAD

- Considerably improved Victorian style end terraced property situated in convenient location near to The Broadway, Walsall
- Two bedrooms
- Two reception rooms
- Superb fitted bathroom with roll top bath and separate shower cubicle
- Gas central heating
- Upvc double glazed windows
- Re-fitted kitchen with oven and hob
- Garden to the rear
- Internal viewing strongly recommended

£99,950 OFFERS

STAR BUY!



EPC: TBC

ESSINGTON SNEYD LANE

- Well maintained & pleasantly appointed end town house style property
- Three bedrooms
- Lounge with feature fire place
- Re-fitted kitchen with oven and hob
- Downstairs w.c
- Upstairs bathroom with shower
- Detached garage and off road parking
- UPVC double glazing
- Gas central heating
- Enclosed rear garden
- Thought ideal for young family or first time buyers
- Internal viewing recommended

OFFERS OVER £179,950

MANAGERS CHOICE



EPC: F

BLOXWICH, WALSALL HARRISON STREET

- Pleasant Victorian style terrace conveniently situated near to Bloxwich High Street
- Two bedrooms
- Upstairs bathroom with shower
- Spacious 23ft through lounge/dining room
- Fitted kitchen
- Garden to the rear
- Upvc double glazed windows
- Ideal first time purchase
- Internal viewing recommended
- No upward chain

£86,950 OFFERS

FREE MARKET APPRAISALS - Call us now on - **WALSALL 01922 478104**

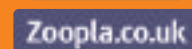
<p>NEW</p> <p>WALSALL HARDEN CLOSE</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> First floor maisonette located in cul de sac position Two bedrooms Gas central heating system Upvc double glazed windows Lounge, kitchen and bathroom Garage in nearby block No upward chain Viewing via agent <p>£44,950 CASH OFFERS ONLY</p>	<p>BLOXWICH BOOTH STREET</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Pleasantly appointed semi detached property thought ideal for first time buyers or a young family Three bedrooms Gas central heating Upvc double glazed windows Upstairs bathroom Bedroom one with fitted wardrobes Garden to the rear <p>OFFERS OVER £89,995</p>	<p>BEECHDALE, WALSALL REMINGTON ROAD</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Pleasantly presented mid town house style property Three bedrooms Gas central heating Upvc double glazing Kitchen diner Lounge with feature fire place First floor modern style family bathroom Enclosed rear garden <p>OFFERS OVER £90,000</p>	<p>BLOXWICH CHURCH STREET</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> PLEASANTLY APPOINTED TWO BEDROOM END TERRACED PROPERTY SITUATED CLOSE TO BLOXWICH TOWN CENTRE TWO BEDROOMS LOUNGE AND DINING ROOMS UPVC DOUBLE GLAZING & GAS CENTRAL HEATING INTERNAL VIEWING STRONGLY <p>£94,500 OFFERS</p>	<p>BEECHDALE, WALSALL HADLEY WAY</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Pleasantly appointed extended semi detached property thought ideal for first time purchasers or a young family Three bedrooms Gas central heating Upvc double glazed windows Lounge and dining rooms Extended fitted kitchen Upstairs bathroom with shower <p>£94,950</p>	<p>BLOXWICH ODELL ROAD</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Town house style property situated in popular and convenient location Three bedrooms Two reception rooms Fitted kitchen Bathroom with shower Gas central heating & upvc double glazed windows Pleasant rear garden <p>£99,950 OFFERS</p>	<p>REEDSWOOD, WALSALL CONWY CLOSE</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ideal first time purchase Very nice two bedroom modern property convenient for m6 motorway links Gas central heating Upvc double glazed windows 18ft rear lounge with french doors First floor bedroom with shower Parking at the fore Internal viewing a must!!! <p>£110,000 OFFERS</p>	<p>REEDSWOOD, WALSALL BENTLEY DRIVE</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Pleasantly appointed deceptively spacious semi detached property Two double bedrooms Two reception rooms Fitted kitchen Fitted bathroom with shower Gas central heating and upvc double glazed windows Lovely established rear garden <p>£120,000 OFFERS</p>
<p>PELSALL OLD TOWN LANE</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Charming character Victorian style end terraced property conveniently situated near to Pelsall Village centre Ideal first time purchase Two bedrooms Gas central heating Upvc double glazed windows Two reception rooms Fitted kitchen with oven and hob <p>OFFERS OVER £130,000</p>	<p>BLOXWICH LICHFIELD ROAD</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Semi detached property situated behind generous frontage along popular Lichfield Road in Bloxwich Three bedrooms Part double glazing Gas central heating Upvc double glazed windows Kitchen and utility room Upstairs bathroom with shower <p>£134,950 OFFERS</p>	<p>WALSALL BELL TOWER CLOSE</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Pleasant modern style town house Four bedrooms En-suite shower room Spacious rear lounge Part double glazing Gas central heating Upvc double glazed windows Garage Off road parking Cul-de-sac location <p>£149,950 OFFERS</p>	<p>BLOXWICH WETHERBY ROAD</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Pleasantly appointed modern style semi detached residence situated in popular Turberville Road development Delightfully located with local countryside views to the fore Three bedrooms Gas central heating Upvc double glazed windows Full width rear lounge/dining room <p>£159,950 OFFERS</p>	<p>BLOXWICH MINEWOOD CLOSE</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> PLEASANTLY APPOINTED MODERN STYLE DETACHED PROPERTY SITUATED OFF BROAD LANE THREE BEDROOMS SUPERB UPVC DOUBLE GLAZED CONSERVATORY OFF ROAD PARKING, VIEWING RECOMMENDED!! <p>£167,950 OFFERS</p>	<p>REDUCED</p> <p>BLOXWICH BROAD LANE</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Much improved semi detached property Extended to the rear and side elevations Popular Broad Lane location Four bedrooms Two reception rooms Bathroom and shower room Detached garage Block paved driveway <p>£174,950 OFFERS</p>	<p>ESSINGTON HIGH HILL</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Pleasantly appointed traditional style detached property situated in popular Essington village location Well maintained accommodation thought ideal for the family purchaser Three bedrooms 21ft through lounge/dining room Fitted kitchen with integrated appliances First floor bathroom with shower <p>£214,950 OFFERS</p>	<p>BLOXWICH SELMANS HILL</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Imposing traditional detached residence situated on much favoured road, offering spacious family living accommodation which should be viewed internally to be appreciated Four good bedrooms Breakfast kitchen Through lounge and separate dining room First floor bathroom and w.c <p>£275,000 OFFERS</p>

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Nutmeg Grove, Walsall
 • Extended Five Bedroom Detached
 • Lounge
 • Open Plan Kitchen/Diner
 • Utility/Guest W.C.
 • Master Bedroom with En-Suite
 • Three Further First Floor Bedrooms

In the Region Of £335,000



Lichfield Road, Walsall
 • Extended Four Bedroom Detached
 • Highest Specification
 • Sought After Location
 • Block Paved Driveway
 • Double Glazing & Gas Central Heating
 • Immaculate Presentation

Offers in Excess of £299,950



Enderley Drive, Walsall
 • Extended Three Bedroom
 • Extended Through Lounge/Dining Room
 • Extended Kitchen/Diner with Integrated Appliances
 • Utility
 • Master Bedroom with En-Suite Shower

In the Region Of £274,950



Ferndown Close, Walsall
 • Three Bedroom Detached Bungalow
 • Lounge/Dining Room
 • Fitted Kitchen with Appliances
 • Master Bedroom with En-Suite
 • Two Further Bedrooms
 • Family Bathroom

Offers in Excess of £260,000



Broadway, Walsall
 • Extended Four Bedroom Semi
 • Three Reception Rooms
 • Conservatory
 • Ground Floor Bedroom & Shower Room
 • Three First Floor Bedrooms
 • Family Bathroom

In the Region Of £250,000



Lincoln Road, Walsall
 • Extended Three Bedroom Semi-Detached
 • Two Reception Rooms
 • Fitted Kitchen with Appliances
 • Guest W.C.
 • Utility
 • Conservatory

In the Region Of £230,000



Birkdale Road, Walsall
 • Four Bedroom Detached
 • Two Reception Rooms
 • Fitted Kitchen
 • Utility Room/Guest W.C.
 • Master Bedroom with En-Suite
 • Three Further Bedrooms

In the Region Of £220,000



Lichfield Road, Walsall
 • Three Bedroom Semi-Detached
 • Two Reception Rooms
 • Kitchen
 • Utility/W.C.
 • Three Bedrooms
 • Family Bathroom

In the Region Of £179,950



Gorey Close, Willenhall
 • Extended Three Bedroom Detached
 • Three Reception Rooms
 • Kitchen/Diner
 • Utility/W.C.
 • Conservatory
 • Newly Fitted Family Bathroom

Offers in Excess of £178,000



Simmonds Close, Walsall
 • Extended Four Bedroom Semi-Detached
 • Two Reception Rooms
 • Extended Fitted Kitchen
 • Utility
 • Four Bedrooms
 • Family Bathroom

In the Region Of £175,000



Stoney Lane, Walsall
 • Three Bedroom Semi-Detached
 • In Need of Modernisation
 • Two Reception Rooms
 • Kitchen
 • Side Passageway
 • Downstairs W.C.

Offers in Excess of £155,000



John Riley Drive, Willenhall
 • Three Bedroom Detached
 • Extended Entrance Hall
 • Lounge
 • Fitted Kitchen with Integrated Appliance
 • Family Bathroom
 • Integral Garage

In the Region Of £142,500



Coppice Farm Way, Willenhall
 • Three Bedroom Semi-Detached
 • Lounge
 • Breakfast Kitchen
 • Laundry Room
 • Three Bedrooms
 • Family Bathroom

£140,000



Ravenscroft Road, Willenhall
 • Extended Three Bedroom Semi-Detached
 • Lounge
 • Fitted Kitchen
 • Additional Sitting Room/Bedroom
 • Ground Floor Wet Room
 • Three Bedrooms

In the Region Of £139,950



The Pines, Walsall
 • Three Bedroom Semi-Detached
 • Lounge/Dining Room
 • Kitchen
 • Family Bathroom
 • Conservatory
 • Garage/Games Room

In the Region Of £135,000



Squires Grove, Willenhall
 • Three Bedroom Terrace
 • Modern Throughout
 • Entrance Hall
 • Lounge
 • Kitchen/Diner
 • Guest W.C.

Offers in Excess of £135,000



Oakridge Close, Willenhall
 • Three Bedroom Semi-Detached
 • Lounge
 • Kitchen/Diner
 • Family Bathroom
 • Entrance Porch
 • Double Glazing & Gas Central Heating

Offers in Excess of £130,000



Well Lane, Walsall
 • Three Bedroom Detached
 • Lounge/Dining Room
 • Kitchen
 • Ground Floor Wet Room
 • Entrance Porch
 • Family Bathroom

In the Region Of £130,000



Lumley Road, Walsall
 • Three Bedroom Mid-Terrace
 • Two Reception Rooms
 • Fitted Kitchen
 • Ground Floor Shower Room
 • Two Double Bedrooms to First Floor
 • First Floor W.C.

In the Region Of £129,950



Dalby Road, Walsall
 • Three Bedroom Semi-Detached
 • Lounge
 • Newly Fitted Kitchen/Diner
 • Guest W.C.
 • Three Bedrooms
 • Newly Fitted Family Bathroom

In the Region Of £129,950



Lane Avenue, Walsall
 • Three Bed Semi-Detached
 • Extended
 • Fitted Kitchen
 • Master Bedroom/Ensuite
 • Bathroom with Shower
 • Through Lounge/Diner

In the Region Of £124,950



Daw End Lane, Walsall
 • Two Bedroom End-Terrace
 • Two Reception Rooms
 • Extended Breakfast Kitchen
 • Sun Room
 • Two Double Bedrooms
 • Family Bathroom

In the Region Of £124,950



Albert Clarke Drive, Willenhall
 • Two Bedroom Semi-Detached
 • Lounge
 • Fitted Kitchen
 • Conservatory
 • Two Bedrooms
 • Family Bathroom

Offers in Excess of £120,000



New Forest Road, Walsall
 • Two Bedroom Semi-Detached
 • Lounge
 • Fitted Breakfast Kitchen
 • Two Bedrooms
 • Recently Fitted Bathroom
 • Front & Rear Gardens

In the Region Of £120,000



Chatsworth Close, Willenhall
 • Two Bedroom Semi-Detached
 • Lounge
 • Fitted Kitchen
 • Conservatory
 • Family Bathroom with Shower Enclosure
 • Detached Garage

Offers in Excess of £110,000



Rough Brook Road, Walsall
 • Show Home Style Two Bedroom First Floor Apartment
 • Lounge/Dining Room
 • Fitted Kitchen including Integrated Appliances
 • Master Bedroom with En-Suite Shower

In the Region Of £104,995



Walkers Fold, Willenhall
 • Two Bedroom Mid-Terrace
 • Lounge/Diner
 • Kitchen
 • Two Double Bedrooms
 • Family Bathroom
 • Front & Rear Gardens

Fixed £104,950



Wychbold Close, Willenhall
 • Three Bedroom End-Terrace
 • Lounge
 • Kitchen/Diner
 • Guest W.C.
 • Master Bedroom with Walk-In Wardrobe Area

Offers in Excess of £100,000



Hawbush Road, Walsall
 • Three Bedroom Mid-Terrace
 • Two Reception Rooms
 • Kitchen
 • Side Entrance
 • Utility/Guest W.C.
 • Family Bathroom

In the Region Of £97,000



Woodcutter Close, Walsall
 • Two Bedroom Apartment
 • First Floor with Lift Access
 • Entrance Hall
 • Lounge/Diner
 • Fitted Kitchen
 • Close to Town Centre

In the Region Of £94,950



Seyvern Road, Walsall
 • Three Bedroom End-Terrace
 • Two Reception Rooms
 • Kitchen
 • Family Bathroom
 • Out-Buildings/W.C.
 • Front & Rear Gardens

Offers in Excess of £90,000



Weston Street, Walsall
 • Two Bedroom Mid-Terrace
 • Two Reception Rooms
 • Kitchen with Pantry
 • Inner Lobby with Utility
 • Ground Floor Bathroom
 • Two Double Bedrooms

In the Region Of £89,950



Ryle Street, Walsall
 • Three Bedroom Semi-Detached
 • Lounge
 • Kitchen/Diner
 • Family Bathroom
 • Front & Rear Gardens
 • Double Glazing

Offers in Excess of £75,000



Cartbridge Walk, Walsall
 • Two Bed End of Terrace
 • Two Reception Rooms
 • Fitted Kitchen
 • Family Bathroom with Shower
 • Front & Rear Gardens
 • Double Glazing

Offers in Excess of £72,000



Fisher Road, Walsall
 • One Bedroom Ground Floor Maisonette
 • Lounge/Dining Room
 • Kitchen
 • Double Bedroom
 • Recently Fitted Shower Room
 • Off Road Parking

In the Region Of £65,000

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- Five Bedroom Detached Dormer Bungalow
 - Two Reception Rooms
 - L' Shaped Kitchen/Dining Room
 - Master Bedroom with En-Suite
 - Two Further Ground Floor Bedrooms
 - Family Bathroom

Monthly Rental Of £1,200.00



- Woodall Street, Walsall
- New Build Three Bedroom Detached
 - Fitted Kitchen
 - Lounge
 - Guest W.C.
 - Master Bedroom with En-Suite Shower Room

Monthly Rental Of £695



- Rough Brook Road, Walsall
- Three Bedroom End Terrace
 - Entrance Hall
 - Fitted Kitchen
 - Through Lounge
 - Family Bathroom
 - Double Glazing

Monthly Rental Of £650



- Pommel Close, Walsall
- Three Bedroom Link Detached
 - Entrance Hall
 - Kitchen/Diner
 - Family Bathroom
 - Garage
 - Off Road Parking

Monthly Rental Of £625



- Wave Close, Walsall
- Two Bedroom New Build Apartment
 - Lift to Third Floor
 - Large Entrance Hall
 - Lounge
 - Separate Fitted Kitchen
 - Bathroom

Monthly Rental Of £595



- Buttermere Grove, Willenhall
- Two Bedroom Terraced
 - Popular Coppice Farm Estate
 - Lounge
 - Newly Fitted Kitchen
 - Bathroom
 - New Flooring Throughout

Monthly Rental Of £550



- Davy Road, Walsall
- Three Bedroom End Terrace
 - Completely Refurbished
 - Entrance Porch/Hallway
 - Lounge
 - Kitchen with Appliances
 - Side Passageway

Monthly Rental Of £550



- Blakenall Lane, Walsall
- Extended Three Bedroom Semi-Detached
 - Two Reception Rooms
 - Kitchen
 - Three Bedrooms
 - Family Bathroom with Shower
 - Front & Rear Gardens

Monthly Rental Of £550



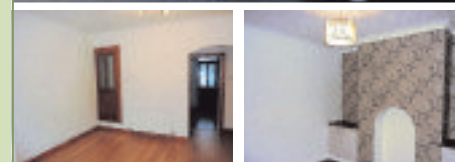
- Stuart Street, Walsall
- Three Bedroom End of Terrace
 - Entrance Hall
 - Lounge & Dining Room
 - Kitchen
 - Bathroom / Separate WC
 - DHSS Accepted

Monthly Rental Of £525



- Jesson Close, Walsall
- Two Bedroom First Floor Apartment
 - Lounge/Dining Room
 - Fitted Breakfast Kitchen with Appliances
 - Two Double Bedrooms
 - Family Bathroom
 - Double Glazing & Gas Central Heating

Monthly Rental Of £525



- Broad Lane, Walsall
- Immaculate Two Bedroom Mid Terraced
 - Two Reception Rooms
 - Fully Fitted Kitchen
 - Family Bathroom
 - Rear Garden & Decking Area
 - Sorry No DHSS, Pets or Smokers
 - Close to Bloxwich High Street
 - NO REFERENCING FEES

Monthly Rental Of £595



- Goscome Lane, Walsall
- Three Bedroom Semi-Detached
 - Lounge with Feature Fire Place
 - Fitted Kitchen with Integrated Appliances
 - Family Bathroom
 - Off Road Parking
 - DHSS Accepted. Sorry No Pets

Monthly Rental Of £495



- Buckingham Drive, Willenhall
- Three Bedroom Detached Property
 - Lounge
 - Fitted Kitchen
 - Family Bathroom
 - Front & Rear Gardens
 - DHSS Accepted

Monthly Rental Of £495



- Terret Close, Walsall
- Two Bedroom First Floor Apartment
 - Lounge with French Doors
 - Fitted Kitchen
 - Bathroom & Ensuite
 - Allocated Parking
 - Sorry No DHSS, Pets or Smokers

Monthly Rental Of £475



- Evesham Crescent, Walsall
- Three Bedrooms
 - Lounge
 - Fitted Kitchen
 - Modern Bathroom
 - Front And Rear Gardens
 - DHSS ACCEPTED

Monthly Rental Of £475



- West Street, Walsall
- Two Bedroom Mid - Terraced
 - Two Reception Rooms
 - Fitted Kitchen
 - Family Bathroom
 - Gas Central Heating & Double Glazing
 - DHSS Accepted. Sorry No Pets

Monthly Rental Of £475.00



- Cresswell Crescent, Walsall
- Three Bedroom Duplex Flat
 - Completely Refurbished
 - New Fitted Kitchen
 - New Fitted Bathroom
 - Large Lounge
 - Entrance Hall

Monthly Rental Of £475



- Providence Lane, Walsall
- Three Bed End Terrace
 - New Flooring Throughout
 - Entrance Hall
 - Lounge
 - Kitchen
 - Downstairs Bathroom

Monthly Rental Of £475



- Evesham Crescent, Mossley
- Three Bed Semi-Detached
 - Entrance Hall
 - Lounge
 - Kitchen
 - Bathroom
 - Diner

Monthly Rental Of £475



- Botany Road, Walsall
- Three Bedroom property
 - Entrance Hallway
 - Lounge
 - Kitchen
 - Family Bathroom
 - Front and Rear Gardens

Monthly Rental Of £475



- Rockingham Close, Walsall
- Two Bedroom Quadrant House
 - Lounge
 - Fitted Kitchen
 - Family Bathroom
 - Allocated Parking Space
 - DHSS Accepted

Monthly Rental Of £465



- Walker Road, Walsall
- Two Bedroom Apartment
 - Lounge
 - Open Plan Lounge / Fitted Kitchen
 - Family Bathroom with Shower
 - Gas Central Heating & Double Glazing
 - Allocated Parking Space
 - DHSS Accepted

Monthly Rental Of £450



- West Street, Walsall
- Two Bedroom Mid-Terrace
 - Two Reception Rooms
 - Fitted Kitchen
 - Ground Floor Bathroom
 - Two Double Bedrooms
 - Double Glazing & Gas Central Heating

Monthly Rental Of £450



- Bloxwich Road, Walsall
- Two Bedroom Flat
 - Lounge
 - Kitchen
 - Bathroom
 - DHSS Accepted
 - NO REFERENCING FEES

Monthly Rental Of £425



- High Street, Walsall
- Two Bedroom Two Floor Flat above Retail Premises
 - Large Lounge
 - Shower Room
 - Fitted Kitchen
 - Double Glazing & Electric Heating

Monthly Rental Of £400



- Moat Road, Walsall
- Two Bedroom Flat
 - Lounge
 - Kitchen
 - Shower Room & WC
 - Electric Heating
 - DHSS Accepted

Monthly Rental Of £350



- Barracks Lane, Walsall
- One Bedroom First Floor Flat
 - Lounge
 - Fitted Kitchen
 - One Double Bedroom
 - Bathroom
 - DHSS Accepted

Monthly Rental Of £300



- Harrison Street, Walsall
- One Bedroom First Floor Flat
 - Lounge
 - Kitchen
 - Bathroom
 - Electric Heating and Double Glazing
 - DHSS Accepted

Monthly Rental Of £300

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Substantial detached in much sought-after area



THIS substantial and much extended detached family residence in Harpur Road, Walsall lies in an enviable position between Walsall and Aldridge centres.

It is for sale through Edwards Moore at £399,950.

With gas central heating and double glazing it has a porch, reception hall with a staircase off, WC, study, dining room with a feature fireplace, a through lounge with an inglenook fireplace with wood burner, doors opening onto the rear garden and further sliding patio door, a breakfast kitchen with a double electric oven and gas hob, wall tiling and ceiling spotlights, master bedroom suite with a Juliet balcony and en suite bathroom, three further bedrooms and a bathroom. Contact Edwards Moore on 01922 621411 or visit the website www.edwardsmoore.co.uk



An immaculate modern detached


THE Green, Darlaston, Wednesbury is an immaculately presented modern four-bedroom detached home built in 2012.

With spacious living accommodation, it is for sale through L&S Prestige at £157,995.

Having double glazing, central heating and off road parking to the rear, it includes an entrance hall, through lounge/diner having French doors to the rear garden, modern through kitchen, ground floor WC and rear hallway. To the first floor there are four bedrooms with the master having an en-suite shower room along with a bathroom.

To the outside there is a block paved frontage surrounded by wrought iron railings. For further information contact L&S Prestige on 01902 606595 or visit www.prestige-estatesuk.com






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Energy Rating C NEW



Walsall
School Lofts, Cecil Street

- Ground Floor Apartment
- Double Glazing, Electric Heating
- Spacious Lounge
- 2 Double Bedrooms
- Modern Fitted Kitchen
- Shower Room/WC
- Allocated Parking
- Easy Access to Amenities

OIRO £79,950

Energy Rating C NEW



Willenhall
Temple Road

- Mid terrace house
- Gas centrally heated
- PVCu double glazed
- 2 reception rooms
- kitchen
- Bathroom/WC
- 2 bedrooms
- Neatly maintained gardens

OIRO £85,000

Energy Rating D



Bentley
Wingate Road

- Semi-Detached House
- Two Reception Rooms
- Kitchen, Side Covered Way
- down stairs WC
- Three Excellent Bedrooms
- Family Bathroom/WC
- Neatly Kept Front and Rear Garden
- Offered with no onward chain

OIRO £109,950

Energy Rating F



Wednesfield
Stubby Lane

- Semi detached house
- Gas centrally heated
- PVCu double glazed
- 2 reception rooms
- Kitchen
- 3 Bedrooms, bathroom/WC
- Driveway and gardens
- Must View

OIRO £125,995

Energy Rating E NEW



Essington
Rowan Drive

- Modern Detached Home
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We know the value of good service...

Ford gets street cred in EcoSport

By David Banner

Sales of small SUVs – cars that look like rugged little off-roaders, but aren't – are expected to nearly double in the next five years. So every car maker with an eye to future growth needs one, and fast.

Say hello to the Ford EcoSport. Designed in Brazil and built in India, it's really a Fiesta underneath the tall and mildly macho new bodywork. That promises a great deal, once you push the engine start button. We'll see.

Before we get there, let's wander round the outside of the EcoSport, perhaps wondering if it will prove either Eco or Sport and noticing the large radiator grille at the front and, rare on a car today, a spare wheel mounted on the back door and hidden beneath a body coloured cover.

Moving it out of the interior frees up room for a decent boot (bigger than most competitors) but does mean the door must be side-hinged, so you have to leave lots of room behind at the supermarket car park or you'll never load the shopping.

Cleverly

The door must weigh a lot too, although Ford cleverly fits a telescopic strut that will actually open it all the way itself after a gentle start from the EcoSport owner.

Now open the driver's door (via a little rubber button, car key firmly left in pocket or handbag) and slide aboard. You'll notice a nicely elevated driving position, one of the reasons people love an SUV, along with the sense of occasion bestowed by mere ownership. More upmarket, somehow, than a mere hatch, don't you think?

If you've jumped into an EcoSport from a current Fiesta (and Ford must hope lots do) you'll spot pretty much the same dashboard ahead of you, with its array of mobile phone-like buttons and tiny screen for lesser tasks like radio and phonebook displays.

Then you'll notice that there's a general lack of feel good soft surfaces, replaced by lots of hard plastic that does nothing to make the EcoSport feel even modestly upmarket.

Just as well, then, that the car comes pretty well equipped for the money. There are only two trim levels, the Titanium as tested here and, for £1,000 more, the Titanium X which adds full leather trim, bigger alloy wheels, cruise control and auto functions for lights, wipers and dimming rear view mirror. Standard on the lower spec EcoSport are 16ins alloys, electric windows all round, trip com-



puter, keyless entry and automatic air conditioning. Bluetooth (surely a modern day must have) is another £250 and you'll need rear parking sensors (remember that spare wheel slung out the back) for £210 too.

Three engines are offered; the 1.0 three-cylinder petrol unit tested today, a 1.5 litre petrol with the option of automatic gears and a 1.5 litre diesel. Prices top out at £17,495 and every car is front-wheel drive; no 4x4 is offered.

What is on offer is plenty of room for driver and four passengers (five at a pinch) with lots of headroom front and rear and even a back seat that can be reclined a little for a more relaxing journey.

You'll be most relaxed if the road ahead is smooth. The EcoSport feels tough as can be but

it never really settles down on a typically pockmarked British road surface. Not awful, but not a patch on the Fiesta that spawned it. Doesn't feel like a Fiesta in bends either, but does its best to overcome the inevitable rock and roll that building a car tall brings with it. Not Sport-like, it must be said.

The car fares better in the first part of its name, with a reasonably Eco 43mpg recorded in a week's typical use. The little 1.0 litre engine is a gem in the Fiesta and does a decent job in the heavier EcoSport too, accompanied by a lovely background burble.

And it helps give Ford a bit of street cred in a part of the car market where everyone wants a piece of the action.

Help with keeping safe on the winter roads

A tyre retailer is taking a bold stance on road safety by offering deferred finance to help drivers avoid using dangerous tyres in the crucial winter months.

The 'buy now pay later' offer from blackcircles.com allows tyres to be bought on interest-free finance, with the balance becoming due after six months on top of a £30 settlement fee.

Alternatively, after the balance becomes due buyers can then pay for their new rubber over 12 further months, at which point interest of 29.8 per cent is applied.

Blackcircles.com claims that as many as 37 per cent of tyres on British cars could be illegal, either because the tread does not meet minimum safety limits or because they have other defects.

Part-worn tyres are very frequently sold illegally, too, adding to the potential dangers for consumers looking to make their money stretch further.

Mike Welch, of Blackcircles.com, said: "We have launched this finance offer as we understand how expensive thistime of year can be and for many of our customers an unexpected bill can make or break their Christmas celebrations."

"The reality is that driving on old worn tyres is not only illegal but potentially dangerous therefore replacing your tyres shouldn't be something that you have to put off – hopefully this offer will allow customers to drive safely and enjoy Christmas."

Plenty of surprises in store from Suzuki

Suzuki has revealed a new-car offensive spanning six models and three years, with some surprises in the mix. Next year is due to bring the new Vitara compact SUV and Celerio city car, but following that will come a practical supermini with a bigger boot and more space than the Swift, while being 90kg lighter.

Suzuki GB's sales and marketing director, Dale Wyatt, said while a return to 660cc turbocharged Kei-car engines has been ruled out, the British public should expect a style-led city car that hopes to shake up the status quo.

"I think it will create a new segment."

"Honestly, there's nothing else like it on the market." He was unable to confirm specific details for the model, which will arrive in 2016, but Suzuki will shortly bring a new 1.0-litre three-cylinder engine to the Swift, which will target 84g/km of CO2 and 'towards 90mpg'.

The next-generation Swift Sport, meanwhile, could be turbocharged to increase its mass-market appeal.

"It will be lighter and more powerful," "I've driven the next generation of [Suzuki's] 'sports' engines and there's plenty to come there."

Plenty of room for driver and passengers

Fingers do legwork for car

Recent research by Evans Halshaw, which has sites in the West Midlands and Shropshire, has found people in the area are tech-savvy shoppers, after spending more than 2,305 hours researching a new vehicle online before venturing to the forecourt.

Dedicated motorists in the area are prepared to visit a website up to 9,880 times, spending an average of 14 minutes per visit, to guarantee they are getting the best deal.

But, with the constant battle against busy lifestyles, many use what little spare time they have to dip in and out of looking for a car. With one in two admitting to relying on their mobile phones or tablets to access the internet on the go.

The findings come as Evans Halshaw announced it's going to make the experience of buying a new vehicle, from research to test drives and final purchase, even easier. Analytics show the number of visits to EvansHalshaw.com on mobile devices is five times higher now than it was in 2010, along with over 700,000 additional visits per quarter from tablets. As a result, Victoria Finn, head of marketing communications and leader of the project team that updated the site explains: "Almost half of the visitors to our website now come via a mobile or tablet device and we only expect this to keep rising. The updates aim to make the research process fast and responsive on every platform with reviews and video content allowing our customers to make well informed decisions."

The research is supported by the latest stats from the Office of National Statistics, which show one in two 25 – 54 years olds depend heavily on the internet to research products or services prior to making a purchase – a 26 per cent increase in the past seven years.

Ian Rimmer a dealer principal at Evans Halshaw Wolverhampton said: "We've noticed a significant increase in visitors to the forecourt who've taken the time to research their new vehicle online first. Whilst many still prefer



to see and test the car in person, it's great to see such an awareness and knowledge of vehicles amongst our customers.

"As a result, buyers expect more from their car dealers than ever before. We have invested in training, are dedicated to service, have installed free customer Wi-Fi in our units and extended opening hours to 10pm for the telephone enquiry line. It's about offering a whole package of services for choice and convenience for customers which is why the new website –combined with the showroom experience – is key to meeting the needs of our customers."

While internet research is on the rise, over 70 per cent of drivers still choose to make such a large investment through a dealership proving the necessity of a being able to sit behind the wheel on a test drive.

Ian Rimmer finishes: "We are one of the first to have invested in this way and as a local business we're very excited to launch our fresh new website which will provide the best mix for motorists in the West Midlands."

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pets corner

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guns & dogs

NOTICE TO ADVERTISERS Advertisers must ensure that they meet all necessary legal requirements for owning and using guns.

5 Business & Farming

business opportunities

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commercial premises sale / let

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6 Property

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NOTICE TO READERS It is an offence under the Accommodation Agencies Act 1953, for an Agency to charge a fee simply for the registration of your requirements and/or supplying particulars of premises to let.

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8 Motoring

cars under £1500

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that the Business Advertisements (Disclosure) Order of 1977 requires that advertisements must clearly differentiate between Private and Trade.

FIAT PUNTO SPORTING 1.2, 3 door, 2002, silver, 57k, s/h, 2 former keepers, 12 months MoT, as new. £895. 07984 141652.

FORD FIESTA 1.25, 02 reg, MoT Feb 15, 83,842 miles, silver, good runner, body needs slight attention. £350. 07405 215217.

FORD KA 2003, 56,000miles, 1 year MoT, cd player power steering, lovely condition. Ladyowner. £650. 07570 466 779.

FORD MONDEO 2004, 2.0 Ghia, petrol, MoT July 15, good condition. 01902 850755.

NISSAN ALMERA SVE, 1500cc, AC, Sat Nav, new exhaust, sun roof, good runner. £1,500 ono. 01543 491989. 07851 774277.

NISSAN PRIMERA SE 2002, 80,000 miles, black, electric windows, air bag, air con, alarm, long MoT, central locking, pas, alloys, stereo, CD, rear parking camera. £1,000. 07582 369719.

PEUGEOT 206 CC, 2004, 84,000 miles, MoT, 2.0 litre, silver, £795 ono. 07568 344410.

RENAULT MEGANE SCENIC 2004, 22k on clock, green, abs, e/w, a/c, alarm, MoT, metallic paint, pas, diesel, alloys, CD, sunroof. £1,250.

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Classified Ads

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ROVER 214, 1995, long Mot, lovely car in and out, no known faults, £480. 07434 481812.

ROVER METRO Knightsbridge, 3dr and 5dr, mechanically good, needs rear wheel arches for MoT, £185 each. 07980 003884 Walsall.

TOYOTA YARIS Verso, 01, 46,500 miles, met dark red, 11 months MoT, very good condition, £1,125. 01922 479590/07957 742129.

VAUXHALL VECTRA 2.0 DTI, 53, alloys, full service history, excellent condition, £1,295. 01543 579587 or 07374 256690.

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BMW 23, 2000, 69K miles, blue, MoT, fsh, pas, electric windows, electric mirrors, new tyres and battery, £2,800 ono. 07807 076927.

CITROEN C2 1.4 Furio, 3 door, automatic, black, 04 reg, 105,000 miles, 11 months MoT. Stunning little car. £1,600. 07948 717055.

FORD FIESTA 1.4 Ghia, 05 reg, 8 months MoT, silver, very low miles 4K, immaculate leather interior, £2,250. Call 07713 905250.

MERCEDES E430, 1999, silver, 74,000 genuine miles, 12 months MoT, 6K, lovely condition, £1,800. Telephone 07970 992872.



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9 Local Information
public & legal notices

LEGAL / PUBLIC NOTICES
For convenience you may fax any advertising requirements to Marie Hogg on 01902 713146 or email marie.hogg@expressandstar.co.uk (remember to include a name/contact number for confirmation of receipt)

Age UK Walsall
(Formerly Age Concern Walsall)
Annual General Meeting
The meeting will be held on 17th December 2014 at 3:30pm
Venue - Age UK Walsall
200 Rookery Lane, Aldridge, Walsall, WS9 8NP
Please contact Age UK Walsall on 01922 638825 if you wish to attend for catering purposes.

Walsall Council, Planning and Building Control
Town and Country Planning Act 1990 (as amended) Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 Development Management Procedure Order 2010 (as amended)
The below applications have been made to the Walsall Council. Applications can be viewed at First Stop Shop, Civic Centre, Walsall or online www.walsall.gov.uk/planning. Representations can be made online, email: planning.services@walsall.gov.uk or in writing to Head of Planning and Building Control, Civic Centre, Darwall Street, Walsall, WS1 1DG. Representations should be made within 21 days of the date of this notice.
Please note: Your letter and personal details will form part of the planning file which is a public document and will be available for inspection at the Council Offices. The information may be released as part of a request under the Freedom of Information Act.
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The Sorrento peninsula and the Bay of Naples is simply one of the most beautiful corners of Europe, attracting visitors for centuries in search of its outstanding scenery, tranquility and some wonderful historic sites.

Sorrento, the base for this holiday, is delightful and so typical of the south of Italy, with tiny cobbled streets, quaint squares with flowers, tubs of geraniums and winding streets lined with tall, seemingly crumbling buildings, now home to superb shops and cosy restaurants.

Price includes:

- Return flights
- Seven nights half-board accommodation in Sorrento
- Guided tour of Pompeii
- Walking tour of Sorrento
- Cruise to Capri
- Tour of Amalfi coast
- Visits to Vesuvius and Ravello
- Visit to Naples Archaeological Museum
- Services of a tour manager
- Single rooms subject to availability – supplement applies

Certain entrance fees payable locally



The Bay of Naples skyline is dominated by the majestic and still-active Vesuvius, which rises to over 4,000 feet and has erupted in spectacular fashion several times in its history, including the obliteration of Pompeii.

In the cosmopolitan city of Naples the Archeological Museum houses some of the historical treasures excavated from Pompeii and Herculaneum. And of course, Pompeii itself, is astonishingly preserved and visitors are moved by the sheer scale and eerie atmosphere.

The journey around the legendary Amalfi coast, which is said to be Europe's most beautiful, takes in the cliff-clinging resort of Positano, the picturesque village of Amalfi itself and Ravello, where visitors can see amazing views over the coastline.

Capri, an island renowned the world over for its outstanding natural beauty, attracted Roman emperors and many famous people and it is not difficult to see why, especially with the chance to visit the famous Blue Grotto, a large cavern which can only be reached by boat.

Berlin

Four days various departure dates

★ **PRICE FROM £419**

Berlin has a unique atmosphere created because of its remarkable history and of course this year marks the 25th anniversary of the fall of the infamous Berlin Wall which once divided the city in two.

The capital is one of the most vibrant cities in Europe, with many attractions to explore.

It is possible to see the difference between the old East and West Germany and even now Trabant cars, synonymous with the East, have been renovated and considered trendy.

The guided tour introduces visitors to the old heart of the city including Unter den Linden; the beautiful green area of the Tiergarten; the cathedral and the university, once numbering Albert Einstein amongst its professors; and the new seat of Government, the Reichstag, covered by an immense glass dome designed by Sir Norman Foster.

Price includes:

- Return flights
- Three nights bed and breakfast accommodation
- Guided tour of Berlin
- Visit to Potsdam and Sanssouci Park including Rococo Palace
- Services of a tour manager
- Single rooms subject to availability – supplement applies

Certain entrance fees payable locally



Then there are the symbols of Berlin, the Brandenburg Gate and what remains of the wall itself. However, the city is not all about war and politics, there are many parks to be explored and of course Germany is home to over 500 breweries with Berlin having its own fair share.

Away from the city the itinerary features a visit to Potsdam and the Sanssouci Park housing the palaces of the most famous Prussian monarch, Frederick the Great, including the well-known Palace of Sanssouci. This delightful palace now rises from the park and crowns a series of ascending terraces affording a panoramic view of the spectacular 740-acre park below.

The holiday includes three nights accommodation at the four-star Movenpick hotel, in the former Siemens factory. It is centrally located near Potsdamer Platz, with easy access to plenty of shops, restaurants, bars and cafes.

Riviera Travel is just one of our tour operator partners. Established for over 30 years they offer fully escorted tours to a number of countries near and far.

Destinations are carefully selected with each holiday featuring a comprehensive itinerary ensuring travellers see the very best the country has to offer. These are further enhanced by experienced tour managers who accompany passengers throughout the whole trip.

Here are just three holidays taken from their 2015 brochure.

Riviera Travel – ABTA V4744, ATOL 3430

India and Nepal

15 days various departure dates

★ **PRICE FROM £2,159**

This 15-day touring holiday encompasses the very best that Northern India has to offer – from fascinating Delhi and the Taj Mahal to Varanasi, one of the oldest cities in the world. And then, in complete contrast, there's Nepal for the chance to seek out rhinos, bears and tigers, share the peace and tranquility of the Buddhist monks and take a once-in-a-lifetime flight to see Mount Everest.



Tours of New and Old Delhi introduce the major sights. New Delhi is a wonderful city that clearly reflects the legacy of the British Raj. Surprisingly green, it is divided by wide tree-lined avenues with the Presidential Palace at its centre.

While in Old Delhi there's the Red Fort, one of the world's great fortifications with huge walls nearly two miles long. And the city is also home of the Raj Ghat, a memorial to the great Mahatma Gandhi.

For most, the highlight of the trip will be the chance to visit the Taj Mahal, undisputedly one of the world's most stunning buildings. Built from dazzling marble its colour changes from white to yellow, cream and almost to orange. Nearby is the 11th century Agra Fort, a UNESCO World Heritage site. Constructed from red sandstone, the building dominates the surrounding area.

A visit is made to Orchha to discover the 14 cenotaphs with parrots and vultures circling these mystical buildings and the chance to marvel at the palaces of the Orchha Fort complex and admire the fine architecture.

There's also the chance to see some of Khajuraho's remarkable temples, one of the seven wonders of India and another UNESCO World Heritage site. Originally 85 temples were built between the 10th and 12th centuries and today, 22 of these mystical shrines survive.

The tour of India concludes in the city of Varansi, a labyrinth of tangled alleys, shops and workshops and it's from here an exciting rickshaw trip down to the river gives an insight to the pilgrims washing in the holy waters and a boat trip takes in the incredible waterfront to witness the Aarti, an impressive Hindu ceremony.

Nepal is completely different to India, and a visit is made to the famous 14th century Boudhanath Stupa, one of the holiest Buddhist sites. Hear the gentle sound of chanting and praying filling the air.

Kathmandu, capital of Nepal, is one of the world's most naturally beautiful countries, set in a bowl-shaped Himalayan valley 4,500 feet above sea level. This captivating city and Nepal's cultural heart is surrounded by breathtaking snow-capped mountains and from here a flight, weather permitting, gives passengers the chance to photograph Mount Everest from the cockpit of the aircraft.

Take the scenic drive to Chitwan National Park, Nepal's most famous wildlife reserve and one of the finest in Asia. From here visit a local village by ox cart to learn how local people live in a sustainable manner and cross a river on elephant back to observe the animals in their natural habitat and hopefully see the elusive Bengal tiger – a truly unforgettable experience.

Pokhara in central Nepal, is another highlight of the holiday, a charming lakeside town, located in a beautiful area with unbeatable views of the Annapurna mountain range.

Accommodation ranges from a three-star lodge in Chitwan National Park to five-star luxury in Delhi and Kathmandu.



Price includes:

- Return scheduled flights
- 13 nights accommodation in a selection of hotels with daily breakfasts and five meals
- Visits to the Taj Mahal, Agra Fort, Orchha Fort and some of Khajuraho's temples
- Boat trips on Ganges and lake in Pokhara, rickshaw ride and elephant-back safari
- Tours of Old and New Delhi, Kathmandu and Varanasi
- Early morning trip to see sunrise over the Annapurna mountain range
- Flight to see Mount Everest and the Himalayas (weather permitting)
- Services of a tour manager
- Single rooms subject to availability -supplement applies

Certain entrance fees payable locally

Smith is ready to hunt for strikers

DEAN SMITH is ready to act in January and go hunting for new forwards should Walsall's goal-scoring woes continue.

With the emergency loan window shut, Smith is persevering with the players currently at his disposal.

But with the Saddlers having netted just 15 times in 19 League games this season, the manager admits he will have no choice but to enter the transfer market if things have not improved by the end of the month.

"We are working with the players we have at the moment," he said.

"We are hoping they will get some confidence and start scoring some goals.

"What we can't have is an over-reliance on Tom Bradshaw like we have at the moment.

"Romaine Sawyers has four goals but he is someone we feel should score a lot more and are constantly telling him that. Jordan Cook has scored one but had his injury earlier in the season and has also been playing out wide a lot.

"Mathieu Manset has not hit the ground running as we hoped he would and Ashley Grimes it still yet to score.

"We are being patient with them for now."

Olympic let Ashton come back

Rushall 1 Ashton Utd 2
AARON Brown's miss from four yards proved costly as Rushall Olympic allowed Ashton United to come from behind for a 2-1 win at Dales Lane in the Evo-Stik Premier.

Two-goal Dale Johnson was United's hero as he turned the game around for his team - who had one gone 1-0 down to an Aaron Williams goal after five minutes when keeper Sam Modlinsky's poor touch allowed the Pies man to steal the ball and flush it home.

Rushall should have doubled their lead midway through the half when Kris Taylor played a ball into the box from a short corner and Brown stabbed it against the post from four yards.

Johnson drew Ashton level on 42 minutes when he headed the ball around keeper Cameron Belford before slotting home.

The winner came when Johnson fired home from two yards after 61 minutes.

Morgan faces FA charge

WOLVES chairman Steve Morgan is facing an FA fine if he is found guilty of insulting referee Mike Jones.

The Molineux chief re-negotiated with Jones following a series of controversial decisions in the 2-1 defeat to Bournemouth on Saturday.

"Football's governing body alleges 'his language and/or behaviour after the end of the fixture was abusive and/or insulting and/or improper'.

Jones had to be escorted off the pitch at the end of the game with a furious Morgan venting his frustration at the official. Morgan has openly apologised.

No thrills or spills in Hull of a dull game

Hull City 0 Albion 0

HAD Baggies supporters taken a nap during the afternoon's 'Premier entertainment', they would have woken to some hard-earned positives for head coach Alan Irvine and his beleaguered Albion team, not that they were ready to acknowledge it in the wake of another miserable afternoon.

But they would have missed precisely nothing in terms of thrills and spills on another afternoon of turgid football.

It is becoming a familiar tale for Albion in this latest troubled season, which even in its more successful moments has become a major trial to watch.

So even when there are redeeming features, as there undoubtedly were from this freezing afternoon on the Humber Estuary, the sense of gloom persists.

There were few Baggies fans with a good

Football

word to say about their team on Saturday evening and, given the blows they have suffered over the last two years, it is tough to criticise their downbeat response.

But Irvine was largely happy with his afternoon's work and, bearing in mind the pressure he is facing for his job at present, his response was equally understandable.

His decision to recall Gareth McAuley to the heart of defence was rewarded with a towering display from the veteran alongside Joleon Lescott and a much-needed clean sheet after several weeks of poor goals being shipped at an alarming rate.

His team defended better as a unit and enjoyed slicker, more confident possession than they had managed of late.

Cherries on top as Wolves losses go on

Wolves 1 Bournemouth 2

YOU earn your luck, so the saying goes - which is perhaps why Wolves got precisely none here.

But for two key moments where the fates conspired against them, Kenny Jackett's men would surely have halted their rotten recent run and stopped the losing streak at four.

Instead, Rajiv van La Parra was harshly sent off by referee Mike Jones, Bournemouth grabbed a deflected equaliser and - after the inevitable late winner - the losing run edged up to five.

The first bit of luck the Cherries had was that Jones was appointed to the game in the first place.

A Premier League official by trade, Jones had been 'demoted' to the Championship after wrongly booking Manchester City's Sergio Aguero for diving against Southampton last weekend.

It is the third time Jones has been punished for such errors, most notably allowing Darren Bent's famous 'beach ball goal' to stand for Sunderland against Liverpool a few seasons ago.

After mystifyingly sending off Van La Parra just before the hour mark - and, almost as harshly, Matt Doherty late on - you wonder whether he will be dropped to League One next weekend.

From the press box, high above the pitch, it was clear Van La Parra's collision with Bournemouth's Steve Cook was an accidental clash of heads between two players going for an aerial ball.

How Jones, comparatively yards away from the incident, construed it as an elbow and a deliberate one at that, only he knows

Football

because the TV replays certainly did not back him up.

Jackett is not a manager to bark abuse at officials or blame them for bad results so when he's clearly biting his tongue after a game, you know something is amiss.

His troops battled on gamely after the Dutchman's dismissal and when pantomime villain Cook - whose every touch was booed by home fans convinced he had exaggerated the contact in the red card incident - poked over from six yards, it seemed they might hold out.

However, with 16 minutes to go, came the second bit of misfortune as Harry Arter's 20-yard strike took enough of a nick off Richard Stearman to fly past Carl Ikeme and bring the Cherries level.

From there, there was only going to be one winner, although Wolves could again consider themselves a smidgeon unlucky to concede.

Ikeme foiled a Ritchie rocket and a combination of the keeper and Stearman kept out Callum Wilson's header before Ritchie bundled home at the third time of asking from 10 yards. It was hard luck on a Wolves back-line that, it could be argued, defended better with 10 men.

Luke gets his cool hands on welterweight title



Bloxwich's Luke Paddock, right, is declared the winner over Josh McLaren in the title bout

BLOXWICH'S Luke Paddock claimed the Midlands Area Light Welterweight title following a scintillating encounter with Josh McLaren.

Both men put their unbeaten records on the line for the vacant Midlands strap following previous champion Calum Cooper's recent retirement.

However, it was the Walsall man's superior skills and ring nous that earned him a deserved 96-93 points victory to make it hat-trick of belts in 2014. McLaren went into the contest, at a packed Queens Theatre

And, most importantly of all, they collected a very useful point at the home of one of their fellow strugglers and stopped the rot after a sequence of four successive defeats that had left Irvine's position under massive scrutiny at The Hawthorns.

But he is still in trouble, as more jibes from his own supporters proved during the second half of a dismal spectacle in which both bosses - Irvine and opposite number Steve Bruce - seemed reluctant to roll the attacking dice for fear of throwing away the point that kept their scoreboard ticking.

Because even on a day when his side enjoyed 51 per cent possession on the road, their painful lack of pace, width and guile in attacking areas meant their first shot on target in open play did not arrive until the 91st minute during this top-flight encounter.

There is a chronic lack of creativity and flair in the head coach's armoury with his doubts the readiness over record signing Brown Ideye, winger Silvestre Varela and Argentine Sebastian Blanco meaning he fielded a 4-5-1 line-up on Saturday without a natural wideman in sight.

The result was predictable and tedious, as Graham Dorrans and Stephane Sessegnon wandered in-field routinely and the middle of the pitch became a congested mess.

In the end, his team recorded a useful draw, but it was dreadful to witness.

His other big call saw leading scorer Saido Berahino left on the bench for the first time this season and, after a series of misfiring performances in recent weeks, the 21-year-old could have few complaints.

However, his omission left his side dismally lacking in goal power.

Anchor is sunk in three-goal shutout

Lichfield & Walsall District Football League Premier

LONGHORN FC 3 Anchor FC 0

Swinfen Hall 1 Prince of Wales 4

League One
Alma FC 4 Dr. Johnson 1

League Two
ASP Victoria 0 Burntwood Star 2

Oak Park Rangers 9 Duke of Wellington 2

Trent Valley Rovers 2 Hussey Arms 0

League Three
Bowman FC 1 Queens Head 0

Cellar Door 5 Scales FC 4

Green Rock Tav. 1 Bwd. Town Res. 5

Ros Park FC 2 W'hal 3

Crowns 3 Wych Elm FC 4 AFC Collingwood 0

Lichfield Challenge Cup - Round One

Pelsall Villa Colts 3 Saddlers Arms 0

Lichfield Charity Cup - Round Two

Boney Hay 2 Miners Rest 1

New Inns FC 3 AFC Bush 1

Rugeley Untd. 3 Q-Bar 2

The second period is a nightmare

Lichfield 71 Walsall Utd 19
WALSALL United rugby team collapsed to an embarrassing defeat at Lichfield leading 17-19 before half time, but eventually lost 71-19.

Connor Fletcher and Dean Alcott scored a try each with Mitch Carless and Andy Hawkins kicking penalties.

Walsall 3rds lost 34-12 at Handsworth. Mike Lockett and Tom Oram scored their tries and James Quigley kicked the conversion.

Dudley Kingswinford Colts 17 Walsall Colts 21

Walsall Colts secured a superb win in their latest league match.

Walsall U-16s 17 Trentham U-16s 29

The hosts defended well for the first quarter and took the lead after Jay Matthews followed up a well placed kick by Tom Olivo

Walsall U-15s hosted Willenhall on Sunday in the first round of the Staffs Cup. Walsall were always going to be too strong for Willenhall in this fixture with the final score 74-0.

Walsall U-14s 33 Stafford U-14s 19

The Walsall U-9s squad produced a superb performance at Worcester.

Reeves ruins Bartley's day

Bartley Green 2 Darlston 3

A superb John Reeves goal sent Darlston two points clear at the top of West Midlands Division Two with a win at Bartley Green.

The visitors went two goals up in the opening 12 minutes.

First on three minutes when Mark Swann cleverly lobbed keeper Connolly.

This gave the visitors confidence to push on and Swann was on hand in the 12th minute heading home a Sam Giles cross.

Brian Radza reduced the arrears in the 29th minute then equalised. Reeves rifled home the winner.

Hutton hurls in the winner for Villa

Villa 2 Leicester 1

ALAN Hutton bagged his first Aston Villa goal as they clinched a feisty 2-1 win over 10-man Leicester.

The right-back, who had been frozen out by manager Paul Lambert before this season, netted with 20 minutes left to cap their comeback.

Leonardo Ulloa ended his drought with his first goal in 10 games to put the Foxes ahead but Ciaran Clark equalised within minutes.

And Paul Konchesky was sent off late on for Leicester after clashing with Hutton - who was lucky to stay on - to compound the visitors' woes.

It left Nigel Pearson's side rooted to the bottom of the Barclays Premier League and lifted resurgent Villa up to 11th.

Charles N'Zogbia and Carlos Sanchez were recalled for the hosts, replacing the suspended Andi Weimann and injured Joe Cole.

Danny Simpson made his first Leicester start since signing from QPR in the summer.

The defender had played just 26 minutes for the Foxes this season and replaced the ill Ritchie de Laet.

Liam Moore replaced suspended captain Wes Morgan and David Nugent was well enough to take his place on the bench after illness.

The visitors took the lead on 13 minutes when Villa failed to shackle Riyad Mahrez and Brad Guzan spilled his deflected effort straight to Ulloa who tapped in.

It was a gift but Villa levelled five minutes

later when Clark was granted the freedom of the area to head in Ashley Westwood's free kick from six yards.

Mahrez shot wide as Leicester responded but Villa had the measure of a spirited, if limited, Foxes side who relied on the pace of Jamie Vardy to threaten.

And the striker was involved in a flash-point late in the half as tempers flared at Villa Park.

First, he clattered into Westwood - forcing the midfielder to be carried off - and was lucky to only receive a caution.

Then Clark caught Ulloa in a strong tackle which forced the striker off at the break, with Nugent his replacement.

Mercifully for referee Craig Pawson, half-time arrived to stop the game spilling over. Villa looked the more likely to edge ahead

after the break and Kasper Schmeichel kept the visitors level when he raced out to deny Benteke, who had run onto Sanchez's through ball.

It was another warning for the Foxes who, after going ahead, had failed to seriously test Villa.

The pace of Agbonlahor continued to stretch Leicester and his angled drive was deflected away by Schmeichel after 55 minutes. But Guzan had to save Villa when he brilliantly turned over Nugent's wonderful 18-yard volley as Leicester suddenly sparked.

Their threat faded, though, as Villa completed their comeback on 70 minutes.

Benteke was given space and time to pick out the unmarked Hutton at the far post and the defender smashed past Schmeichel.



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Derby is hit by switch of venue

Willenhall RUFC 17
Wednesbury RUFC 11
AFTER their stunning 90 point victory a fortnight ago Wednesbury were up for this game against their local rivals Willenhall.

A switch of venue made it extremely difficult for Wednesbury as some of their players had made other arrangements so they had to travel with a weakened side.

Wednesbury started the game in good form their pack in dominant form pushing their opponents all over the park; this gave a platform for the team to take the game to Willenhall. Lee Allwood had an outstanding game putting sterling work all around the park and scoring Wednesbury's only try.

Dan Till added two penalties late in the half to give Wednesbury 11-0 lead at the break.

After the interval Wednesbury kept the pressure on the home side, but then Wednesbury had two players yellow carded leaving them down to 13 players for part of the game. Willenhall took advantage scoring three tries and a conversion to take the lead. Even with Wednesbury back to full strength they could not get back into the game.

Willenhall 2nds beat Wednesbury 2nds 50-0.

Wolves face Fulham in Cup

WOLVES have been handed a trip to Craven Cottage in the third round of the FA Cup with Albion given a plum tie with non-league side Gateshead.

Kenny Jackett's men have happy memories of playing Fulham this season, after Bakary Sako bagged the winner as Wolves claimed the Championship points with a 1-0 victory.

Under-pressure Baggies boss Alan Irvine will welcome a run in the famous old competition and his side have been given a huge chance of making it through to round four after being paired with the north-east outfit.

Villa, meanwhile, are also at home against Lee Clark's Blackpool while his former club - Birmingham City - will take the trip to giant-killers Blyth Spartans.

The ties will be played between January 3-6.

Khalsa staying on league leader's tail

Sporting Khalsa 3 Gornal Athletic 0

SPORTING Khalsa kept in touch with leaders Bridgnorth, securing a ninth consecutive league victory with a comprehensive 3-0 win over third-placed Gornal.

Ian Rowe's side dominated from start to finish with the visitors rarely putting pressure on the home team's goal.

Ex-Gornal man Marvin Nisbett opened the scoring on 11 minutes, reacting well to some slapdash defending to prod home the first of three goals which gave Khalsa the match.

Nicky Campbell should have doubled the

Football

lead on 23 minutes, finding himself one on one with the goalkeeper only for Rich Kennedy to pull off the first of a series of excellent saves.

Just seconds later, however, Mensah Kinch was brought down in the area by Carl Martin and Tim Jackson lashed home the spot-kick.

Kennedy produced the save of the match on 41 minutes to deny Craig Bannister, diving to tip over a rocket of a shot that was

destined for the roof of the net. The second half saw Bannister again in the thick of the action and, once again, frustrated by the efforts of Kennedy.

First, within a minute of the restart, Kennedy blocked a shot as Bannister surged through and the striker was unable to convert the loose ball.

And two minutes later excellent work by Campbell down the right saw a curling, tempting ball put into the danger zone, somehow evading Bannister's lunging effort to connect.

Kennedy produced another brilliant save

on 83 minutes, diving to the near post to put the block on a goal-bound drive by Mike Perks.

But deep into stoppage time a loose throw in by Gornal's Carl Martin was miscontrolled by Steve Edmonds, enabling Randy Davis to whip in a brilliant cross to find the head of fellow substitute Chris Rabone to head home.

The goal gave a more honest reflection of the balance of the match and means Khalsa remain one point behind Bridgnorth with four games in hand to keep them in the chase.

Aldridge battle is in vain

Midlands 5 West (North)
Warley 26 Aldridge 21

WARLEY made the best of starts, scoring almost from the off with centre Cash Redding posting the first of his two first half tries

Full-back Scott Boulton converted but Aldridge hit back pretty swiftly through winger Nick Yates and an Alex Yates penalty put them into the lead which they threatened to increase until a second effort from Redding, just before the break, again converted by Boulton restored the lead back to the home side.

This was further increased two minutes into the second period when the bounce of a speculative kick-ahead into the Aldridge dead ball area defeated the defence and was pounced upon by No.10 Tony Bekker. The visitors made a rapid riposte squeezing winger John Phipkin into the corner and a second Alex Yates penalty made further inroads into the deficit.

From a lineout some fancy footwork by scrum half Marcus Taylor bamboozled the defence opening up a clear run in to the try line. Boulton converted. Lennie Jaep got the last score.

Pole is up for Monmore role

WOLVERHAMPTON have confirmed they are in talks with Polish speedway prospect Tobiasz Musielak.

Club bosses Chris Van Straaten and Peter Adams will head to Poland next week to finalise terms with the rider. Musielak confirmed he had been in talks with the Parrys International Wolves.

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WALSALL Wood kept the Wembley dream alive with a revenge victory over the Fenmen.

They led three times but were pegged back twice by a very good United Counties League side currently lying sixth.

Goals from Ben Evans and Max Black put Wood in the driving seat.

It was Joey Butlin in the 90th minute who broke Fenland hearts and put Wood through to Round 4 on January 17.

The opening goal came on 36 minutes when Ben Evans picked his spot and drilled the ball into the right hand corner past Lee Jordan.

The Fenmen put Wood under constant pressure at the start of the second half, a careless challenge in a central position 25 yards out gave Smith an opportunity and he fired the free kick into the top left hand corner.

Delivered

Both sides were playing attacking football but the all important next goal came from a right wing free kick delivered to the far post by Harris. Curritthers powered in a header that Jordan somehow kept out but couldn't hold, goal poacher extraordinaire Max Black forcing the ball home.

The lead lasted two minutes, a right wing corner was hit to the near post, a mad scramble ensued and Kisiel made an incredible point blank save to keep the ball out. Wood couldn't

Football

get the ball away and it flew around the box before Beaumont hammered the ball home through a crowd of players.

Kisiel saved Wood again within a minute, Reid crossed from the left for Stuart Cobb to blast home the winning goal from 10 yards, but the keeper somehow kept the ball out, only for it to fly to Fairweather who as the ball bounced away from him could only screw his effort fractionally wide.

With everyone looking forward to extra time Curritthers cut back inside from wide left and found Butlin in the centre of the box.

He held the ball up superbly before turning outside his marker and firing the ball into the bottom right hand corner to send the Wood faithful into euphoria and break Fenland hearts.

This was an old fashioned cup tie, no quarter asked or given, sympathetically refereed and both sides, at the end, acknowledging the game could have gone either way - it's Wood who go on to the next round A pity there had to be a loser.

No ifs or Butts as Walsall shuts game down



Walsall's Jeffery Williamson breaking through the Butts defence during the match

Walsall 55 Barkers Butts 0
IN recent games Walsall had been consistently guilty of squandering match winning opportunities. But, none of this was evident at Delves Road at the weekend as they scored eight tries.

Gary Weston kicked a penalty to open the scoring.

Soon afterwards the hosts found themselves in a similar position and after a powerful scrum and a strong

carry by Tarik Tin, fly half Matt Wood weaved his way through the defence from 15 metres.

The last score of the half came after a Neil Pittaway chip bounced kindly for Paul Naylor which resulted in the winger racing away for a try.

The second half saw the home forwards take a grip of the game. The visitors struggled to cope with some of the strong Walsall forward drives.

This resulted in tries for No.8 Dickson and his replacement Dan Simpson, as well as a penalty try after another Dickson charge.

But there was also some fine handling skills being displayed despite the muddy conditions and these led to two further scores. Naylor scored his second.

Another superb score came from Adam Ahmadani.

Flanker Hickman then went over.

